

**EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE
EDUCATORS WITHIN A CONTEXT OF CURRICULUM CHANGE
IN ENGLISH LITERACY**

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DECLARATION

I, Priscilla Selishna Tolmen, (Student number 211557444) do hereby declare that this dissertation, which is submitted to the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal for the degree of Master of Education, has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at any other university, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference.

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ABSTRACT

The year 1990, marked significant political changes in South Africa, and heralded a defining change in education as significant changes were implemented in the curriculum as one of the many attempts to rectify the injustices of an apartheid system and Bantu Education. The importance of improving literacy at the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3) has been a major challenge for the new curriculum (National Education Evaluation and Development Unit – National Report 2012). Although education has become more accessible for all learners, the results in Literacy, especially in the Foundation Phase have not improved, as is evident from the results from the Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation in 2003 and 2007 and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006 and in 2011. Learners reading and comprehension levels continue to be low, and writing, reading and verbal skills are inadequate. The poor results of learners and their difficulties experienced in Reading has compelled the Department of Education to re-evaluate the curriculum and modify it to boost learner performances in English. The observation of this poor performance and of the several changes to the curriculum (particularly in literacy in the case of this study) provides the rationale for this research to be undertaken. This thesis was aimed at identifying the challenges experienced by Foundation Phase teachers in English as a first additional language within a context of a changing curriculum.

The study is an interpretative one and uses a qualitative, case study approach. To obtain the data, four educators were purposively sampled, and requested to participate in semi-structured interviews in which their experiences with curriculum change were explored. Observations of their lessons and documentary analysis were also conducted to elicit richer data. The study, which is located at a public school in the urban area in the Pinetown district of the Mafukuzela Gandhi Circuit, Kwa-Zulu-Natal, South Africa, serves to explore the experiences of Foundation phase educators. The researcher, who is an educator for 19 years is motivated by personal, political and contextual factors and asks the following critical questions: 1. *What changes have been effected in literacy (English) in Foundation Phase?* 2. *How do Foundation Phase teachers experience these changes?*

The literature review focused on curriculum change and how this had affected the teaching of English Literacy in the Foundation phase with special emphasis on educator's strategies and

approaches to teaching this subject. The conceptual framework of the use of New Literacy Studies approach which regards Literacy as a social practice and how this facilitated learning is explained.

The study suggests that while the participating educators are happier with the CAPS system and make attempts to use it, their lack of training as Foundation Phase educators, large numbers of children who have no English language background, as well as lack of home support in terms of homework follow up, and the poor the socio-cultural background works against an effective implementation of the CAPS policy.

It is suggested that the Department of Education provide regular and constructive support so that educators can be successful in the classroom. In this study, it was argued that experiences in English First Additional Language pedagogy within a context of changing curriculum is a complex and difficult process and requires careful planning, adequate time, funding and support and opportunities for successful teacher engagement.

List of Acronyms

1. PIRLS – Progress in International Literacy Study 2006, 2011
2. DOE – Department of Education
3. NCS – National Curriculum Statement
4. OBE – Outcomes Based Education
5. RNCS – Revised National Curriculum Statement
6. CAPS – Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
7. ANA – Annual National Assessment
8. SMT – School Management Team
9. TIMMS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

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CHAPTER ONE

Describing the Context

1.1 Introduction

The year 1990, which introduced significant political changes in South Africa, also marked a defining moment for changes in education, and the deliberations about curriculum saw an adoption of significant changes in curriculum (Jansen, 1999). Since 1994, when South Africa's initial democratic elections were held, education in post-apartheid South Africa was characterized by government attempts to democratize education, and in particular, "to allow all students equity of access to key competences such as literacy" (Govender, 2011, p. 2) as one of the many attempts to rectify the injustices of an apartheid system and Bantu Education. The importance of improving literacy at the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3) has been a major challenge for the new curriculum (National Education Evaluation and Development Unit – National Report 2012). Although education has become more accessible for all learners, the results in Literacy, especially in the Foundation Phase have not improved, as is evident from the results from the Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation in 2003 and 2007 and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006 and in 2011. Learners reading and comprehension levels are extremely low, their writing skills are not properly developed, they cannot follow written instructions and they cannot express themselves. This poor performance "reinforces the need for reading instruction practices that address the difficulties in language and reading in both the Foundation and Intermediate Phases", (PIRLS SA 2011 report, p. 116).

Webb (2002, p. 30) suggests that a reason for this dismal performance is that problems occur at the implementation stage of the new curriculum, and that a basic problem seems to be "a mismatch between government policy and implementation" (Govender, 2011 p. 4).

Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association (GADRA, 2012) proposes that this "poor performance is due to the change in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of learners from home language to English in Grade 4". English is not adequately taught in Foundation phase, hence learners are unprepared for this change. Nkabinde, (2012 p. 10) states quite emphatically that Heads of Departments in Foundation phase could be contributing to poor

results in Foundation phase due to their “insufficient support provided to learners and educators”.

Although much has been done to make the education system more accessible to learners countrywide as promised by the government after the initial democratic elections in 1994, the implementation of a new curriculum has been beset with constant changes and corrections, and the transitions from one system to the next has not been smooth. According to Mseleku, Director-General of Education (2003), “the majority of South African teachers have grappled with an education system that has been in the throes of rapid transformation sparked by the student cohort of 1976. Throughout the 1980s, education served as one of the focal areas that characterized resistance to the injustices of apartheid.” (DoE, RNCS, 2003). According to Jansen, (1999, p.4), 1990 is significant, because it was “a critical turning point in the curriculum debates inside South Africa”. Jansen (1999, p. 70) further asserts that “the year also brought about political changes hence it also brought about changes in education”. That the Curriculum would be eagerly received and implemented by all educators with ease has not unfolded as expected.

This study, titled *Exploring the experiences of Foundation Phase educators within a context of curriculum change in English Literacy*, which used a qualitative framework and adopted an Interpretivist paradigm, was located in a primary school in Durban. An attempt was made to explain what changes had been effected in literacy (English) in Foundation Phase, and how Foundation Phase teachers experienced these changes.

In this chapter, the focus and purpose of the study, the objectives, the critical questions, rationale for the study, a definition of Foundation phase, Curriculum, General Language Policy and the limitations of the study are discussed.

A review of various research articles, journals and books (Chisholm, 2004 and 2005, Jansen 1997, 1998, 2008 and McBeath 1995) about curriculum change revealed information on how children learn, and how teachers teach. A teacher is responsible for shaping and moulding learners and are “catalysts for change and effective learning.” (Harrison and Killion, 2007). They help teach young children to read, help them understand the world around them and to write.

It is important that teaching and learning are structured, and a curriculum often successfully meets this demand. According to Braslavsky (1999), a curriculum ensures that information is passed on and knowledge is constructed. A curriculum designer uses curriculum models to design a curriculum. During a period of educational chaos in America during 1950, one of the early, seminal theorists, Tyler (1949), formulated a programme which became the blueprint for curriculum design. He based his approach on four main points, viz., that schools, list or define the educational purposes they should strive for; develop particular educational experiences to achieve this list; effectively organize these educational experiences for maximum student benefit, and enable feedback mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of these educational experience. Klein (1991, pp 218-219) in referring to the relevancy of a curriculum asserts that “a relevant curriculum helps ensure that learners will become engaged in what they are expected to learn”. If a curriculum is irrelevant, learner drop-out rate increases. Learners cannot identify with the curriculum.

Since 1994, the curriculum has gone through several changes with the initial change to OBE, then RNCS, NCS and eventually CAPS (Chisholm, 2004, 2005 Jansen 1998, 1999). This has had a destabilizing effect on educators and learners. Just when teachers and pupils settled in with the South African Curriculum, understand its requirements and are working well, changes are made to that Curriculum. Each curriculum has posed numerous problems. The transition from one system to the next has not been very smooth (Coetzee, 2012).

Although this study is applicable to all age groups, this study was limited to the Foundation phase. Foundation phase (the first phase of the General Education and Training Band (Grades R–3, Department of Education, 2003, p.19) is the most important part of the learner’s life. If the learner is not successfully taught it hampers future learning. An analogy can be drawn to a house. If the foundation is not strong and built correctly, the house can be built but, in due course of time cracks will start to show, small at first but will widen and surely the house will crumble and collapse. This, this study was undertaken to understand teachers’ experiences with curriculum implementation and how curriculum changes in English had been received by educators and the effect of that upon their understanding, teaching and how children imbibed knowledge and skill, as well as responded.

In this chapter, the focus and purpose of the study, the objectives, the critical questions, rationale for the study, a definition of Foundation phase, Curriculum, General Language

Policy and the limitations of the study are discussed, and a chapter by chapter overview of the study described .

1.2 Focus and purpose of study

The focus of this study is to understand educators' experiences with Literacy in the Foundation phase. The study focused on the acquisition of literacy, the teaching techniques employed by educators, and the support that was provided for educators. The purpose of the study is to explain curriculum change in literacy (English) for Foundation Phase and to explore teacher experiences of such change, viz, teachers' experiences with curriculum implementation, how curriculum changes in English had been received by educators, and the effect of that upon their understanding and teaching.

The purpose for conducting this study was driven by several imperatives namely, personal, policy and contextual. Firstly, my personal imperative is informed by my experience as a Foundation phase (Fp) educator who has mentored and supervised other educators in my phase. As a mentor of the Fp educators, I often receive feedback about problems they experience during the curriculum delivery process. Teachers are not properly trained during the workshops. The Curriculum is not unpacked properly. In most cases the facilitators themselves do not know what is happening, because they have not received proper training. The unpacking of the curriculum during workshops is hastily done in a few days. During the workshop sessions educators and the facilitators do not interact with each other. There are no mentoring facilities available to educators or follow-up programmes to ascertain if any problems exist.

Although poor results or high failure at a school is reported in the media (News24, Mail and Guardian) the root of the problem is often not addressed. Being a teacher in the 21st century is extremely difficult especially in Africa: there are problematic pupils, hunger, poor nutrition and ill health in communities, violence at home, HIV/AIDS and child-headed homes, large classes, multi-grade classes, and a lack of resources, under-qualified and unqualified educators (Bloch, 2011). As a teacher myself, I had a deep interest in exploring the curriculum and the factors affecting its delivery. I have been constantly faced with these factors and feel that effective curriculum delivery is a blend of both effective teaching and overcoming learning barriers. In South Africa, the curriculum has often been in a state of uncertainty. According to Chisolm, (2005, p.82) "Curriculum itself is constantly revised in

terms of new needs and priorities, pressures and politics”. In the school which forms the site of this study, many learners lack literacy skills (namely: lack of writing abilities, letter recognition, reading skills and sentence constructions, many have not attended Grade R, and the home language of many learners is IsiZulu).

Secondly, from a policy imperative, curriculum change is executed by the Department of Education with the aim of guaranteeing that all children receive an equal and sound education (The South African Schools Act, DoE, 1996). The transformation of education was an urgent priority for the SA government since the establishment of democracy in 1994, so that all children “irrespective of their race, class, gender, religion and/or other characteristics, have access to basic education that was of good quality” (DoE, 2003a). This would ensure that every child has access to an education. The curriculum has had several changes and reformations since then. While it may be understood that changes were necessary, the implementation became experimental and had an effect of destabilizing both the child and the educator (Jansen, 1998, 1999 and Chisholm, 2004, 2005). The fact that the curriculum was revised several times indicates an acknowledgment from the SA Government that OBE failed to provide an adequate education policy.

For any policy to be successful, it must be implemented at the grass roots entry level, that is, the Foundation Phase. Problems that arise here have to be eradicated before the curriculum is introduced at the next level. Hence, in Foundation Phase, there have been many trials and tribulations surrounding curriculum implementation. Literacy (English) has to be thoroughly understood by learners, because if it is not, the learner will struggle in the other grades, especially in Grade 4. According to the policy documents, educators focus on developing the basic literacy skills that pupils learned in the Foundation phase. If pupils are unable to write paragraphs/sentences properly, if their spelling and word recognition are not grade appropriate, they will encounter difficulties in the later grades.

Thirdly, several contextual factors affect curriculum change. According to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, 2011, p. 93), “school resources, instructional approaches, teacher characteristics, student attitudes and parental involvement” are some of the contextual factors that) have identified as impinging upon learner achievement. This emphasizes that the teaching strategy used and the content of the curriculum play a vital role in curriculum change. As an educator who is implementing the

new curriculum, I am very apprehensive, because I feel that I am not prepared and knowledgeable about the curriculum. As both the participants of this study and I are part of the context, it is important to explore the teachers' understanding of the change in curriculum and the ramifications of that on their implementation, as this has a cascading effect upon how learners are taught.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

This research study aims to explore the various challenges to curriculum delivery and, how this affects English literacy, especially at the Foundation level. The results from this study may be used to inform the improvement of educator teaching methods, increase understanding of learners, to inform universities that cater for Foundation phase teacher training and inform Department policy and curriculum development.

1.4 Key Research Questions

- What changes have been effected in literacy (English) in Foundation Phase?
- How do Foundation Phase teachers experience these changes?

The purpose of key research question 1, *What are the changes that have been effected in Literacy (English) in the Foundation phase*, is to elicit teacher's own perceptions and understanding of the curriculum. The purpose of key research question 2, *How do Foundation phase educators experience these changes*, is to understand the experiences of teachers' working with the curriculum.

The above key questions were chosen to track the changes in Literacy that were effected during each of the Department's curriculum review. The experiences of Foundation Phase educators are thus important, and their interactions with the changes were also an important consideration.

1.5 Concept Clarification

The following concepts are explained below as they form essential components of the discussion and are thus relevant to this study.

1.5.1 Curriculum

There are many definitions of curriculum which can be quite confusing, however the following definitions highlight the essence of what it means:

According to Lemmer and Badenhorst (1997, p. 259) “the word curriculum has many possibilities of learning. The term is of Latin origin and refers to a race, track or a racetrack (*cursus* -“a running”; *currere* -“to run”), hence its association with the educational track on which learners move. In this sense it suggests a period needed for a process of learning to be completed.”

Darling-Hammond, Orcutt, and Cheung (2001, p. 36), noted the following regarding developmental practice:

- The curriculum concentrates on social, emotional, cognitive and physical goals.
- An extensive selection of learning experiences, materials, instructional approaches are used tactically.
- Children’s differences in learning and interests are accommodated.
- Curriculum and teaching back individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity, and encourages constructive affiliations with families.
- Curriculum shapes children’s prior knowledge and consolidates their future learning.
- The curriculum inspires active learning.
- Content and skills are related, critical thinking, reasoning, decision making, and problem solving are encouraged.

The definition of curriculum is further explained by Kerr, quoted in Kelly (1999), as “all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school.” Goodlad and Su (1992) explain curriculum as a blueprint that comprises of learning opportunities for a precise time frame and place, a tool that brings about behavioral changes in learners as a consequence of prearranged activities and embraces all learning experiences.

According to Ebert II, Ebert and Bentley (2013), “Curriculum refers to the means and materials with which students will interact for the purpose of achieving identified educational outcomes”. They further state that, “Curriculum is the all planned learning for which the

school is responsible, and also is all the experiences learners have under the guidance of the school”.

The Nigerian Open University (2006, p. 15) suggests that “Curriculum is an organized framework that delineates (i.e. outlines) the content children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur.”

Curriculum is broken down into *Formal Curriculum*, which is an intentional programme of actions which scholastic establishments make accessible to scholars for a definite time frame to achieve definite purposes; *Hidden Curriculum* is when children whilst interacting with their educators and peers learn about skills, morality, values, etc. This forms a fundamental part of their schooling. *Core Curriculum* refers to the essential parts of the curriculum which is essential for every students and School Curriculum refers to every subject that a school offers. (Ssebunnya, 2013).

Ritchie and Willer (2008, p. 1), state that a curriculum concentrates on the “social, emotional, physical and cognitive goals”. A diverse selection of equipment, educational skills, materials and instructional approaches are utilized tactically to allow for individual differences in children’s studying. Curriculum and instruction supports ethnic and language differences, and inspires constructive relations with relatives. Curriculum shapes children’s existing knowledge and activates prior knowledge to merge their learning and achievement of the latest ideas and abilities. The curriculum inspires active learning which is accomplished by viewing, gathering evidence, relating, working with what they have learnt. There is a link between content and skills, instead of teaching it separately. This is done to encourage the progress of intellectual, cognitive, evaluation, and elucidating skills. When children learn, they become responsive and develop through exploring, inquiring, using information in applications. Teachers make children aware of how to use prior learning in present situations. Teachers help to develop children’s analytical thinking.

1.5.2 Foundation Phase

The Foundation phase is the basis for all future learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum (Howells, 2013, p. 2). The child is exposed to formal learning. The Foundation-phase consists of grades R, 1, 2 and 3 which are within the Early Childhood Development

(ECD) phase. It is the first phase of the General Education and Training Band (Grades R-3, Department of Education, 2011), and forms the basis of learning. It is here that children learn the chief skills, knowledge and ethics. There is more steadiness and permanency in children's learning at a very important time of their growth.

In the Foundation Phase children are actively involved hence their learning is greater. They develop their speaking, reading, listening writing skills and this boosts their confidence levels. When children read, they cultivate the one-to-one correspondence; they work with symbols, letters and sounds. Children arrange letters and words and assemble them into sentences, instructions or commands. The curriculum emphasizes experiential learning, dynamic involvement and develops a child's skills and understanding, personally, socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually.

According to Chomsky (1965, p. 25) a few language structures which are used very precisely should be "etched on the child's cognizance." Chomsky is confident that all children have a "language acquisition device" or "LAD". He further stresses that children do not learn purely by imitation. However, many critics have refuted Chomsky's claim that children have LAD. Crystal (1987) states that children learn languages in five stages and through trial and error they successfully learn the language and Aitchison (1987) identified three stages during a child's acquisition of vocabulary: labeling, packaging and network building . During Labeling a child links the sounds and words, packaging involves understanding the different meanings of a word and network building involves understanding words and understanding that some words have opposite meanings.

Crystal, (1987) states that children learn in five stages. Children use "Holophrases", that is, words are used for commanding, questioning, exclaiming or as statements. Children then construct a sentence that contains only two words. At this stage children develop an enquiring mind. They use 3 word sentences with the correct word order. In the next stage, children construct very complex sentences. Their language usage is meaningful and their explanations are also very constructive. In the last stage, children are more au fair with language usage and are very confident.

Stern (1992) also focuses on five linguistic knowledge approaches:

Management and Planning—here it is intended that the student express and supervise his individual studying, with the assistance of the educator, who acts as both advisor and source. Stern (1992, p. 263) emphasizes the process the student goes through: “Decide what commitment to make to language learning, set himself reasonable goals, deductive reasoning, decide on an appropriate methodology, select appropriate resources, and monitor progress and evaluate his achievements in the light of previously determined goals and expectations”.

Cognitive approaches: clarify/verify, guess/induce, infer, reason deductively, practice, memorize, monitor.

Communicative–Experiential: students use these methods to maintain discussion and ensure that communication is not interrupted. Stern subdivided the above strategy into: gesture, paraphrase, circumlocution, or repeating and explaining.

Interpersonal approaches: here students monitor their growth and evaluate execution by contacting and cooperating with native speakers.

Affective approaches: language learning does cause frustration and language learners are aware of this. A positive affect should try to be created.

In the school chosen for this research, the class units are divided into three phases, viz., Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase. In the Foundation Phase children “from birth to nine years grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially.” (DOE, 1995, p. 33). The learner is exposed to education for the first time and has to adapt to this environment for the following twelve years. In the Foundation Phase in most schools, the learners spend the entire day with the same educator who is responsible for the overall education of all learners in the class.

1.5.3 General Language Policy

According to the South African Population Census 2011, English is one of the 11 officially recognized verbal. The 2011 Census (Lehohla, 2012. pp. 23–25) recorded the following distribution of first language speakers. Zulu and Xhosa speakers were the highest (22, 7% and 16 % respectively). This was followed by Afrikaans and English.

Table 1: Language speakers: Census 2011: Census in brief Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. pp. 23-25.

| Language | 1st Language speakers | Percentage |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| Zulu | 11,587,374 | 22.7% |
| Xhosa | 8,154,258 | 16.0% |
| Afrikaans | 6,855,082 | 13.5% |
| English | 4,892,623 | 9.6% |
| Northern Sotho | 4,618,576 | 9.1% |
| Tswana | 4,067,248 | 8.0% |
| -Sotho | 3,849,563 | 7.6% |
| Tsonga | 2,277,148 | 4.5% |
| Swati | 1,297,046 | 2.5% |
| Venda | 1,209,388 | 2.4% |
| Ndebele | 1,090,223 | 2.1% |
| Sign language | 234,655 | 0.5% |
| Other languages | 828,258 | 1.6% |
| Total | 50,961,443 | 100.0% |

According to Howie (2002), “the issue around the language policy for teaching and learning has become a sensitive and controversial one in South Africa, and given its history, perhaps more so than in any other African country”. English is spoken by very few people, only

9.6 %, and it is also not widely spoken at home. 23% of the people speak IsiZulu at home, 16 % of the people speak isiXhosa and 13.5% of the people speak Afrikaans. Only 2.1% of the people speak isiNdebele. Given the low statistic of English speakers in SA according to Table 1 above, the importance of English literacy in schools, and in particular the structure and objectives of the English literacy curriculum for Foundation Phase becomes particularly relevant. Teachers in public schools often have learners whose first language is not English, a situation that compounds the problem of teaching and learning English.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The limitations of a study refer to the design or methodology that had an influence in the interpretation of the study. In this study the following limitations were noted.

1. Methodological: a recorder can only capture the audio. The unspoken thoughts, feelings or emotions could not be captured on tape. Only the spoken words of the interviewee could be captured. The respondent's confidence or indifference to the questions could not be captured. This was evident when the respondents were answering questions and did not keep eye contact.
2. Contextual: There are several contextual factors that differ; teachers are trained and mentored at different levels and therefore their understanding, access to and levels of knowledge will differ. Some educators are qualified and experienced whilst some are not. Although the participants were from the same school, their teaching approaches also differed from each other. Another contextual factor was the sample size that was limited by a small number of participants although I tried to obtain a larger sample size.

Given that the study was a qualitative, interpretivist one, the responses of the individual participants are prioritized, as the study does not seek to generalize results, but seeks a nuanced understanding of how each teacher in the sample understood the changes in the curriculum.

1.7 Study Overview

In this chapter, a brief summary of the rationale of this study was provided. A proposal to explore the experiences of Foundation phase educators within a context of curriculum change in English Literacy and describe curriculum change and how this impacted on learner results was undertaken.

In Chapter two, which is the literature review, the focus will be on past, recent or current curriculum that embraces the teaching of English in Foundation phase. It also emphasized the approaches and strategies educators use for successful implementation of the curriculum. It tracked curriculum change over the years and also highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of each curriculum that was presented by the Department of Education. The conceptual framework of New Literacy Studies was explained.

In the third Chapter, research design and methodology are explained. A qualitative approach was described. The strategy of lesson observations and semi-structured interviews and its usage to provide rich data was described. The motivation for a case study approach, purposive sampling, trustworthiness, ethical considerations were also deliberated.

In the fourth Chapter, an analysis of the data was explained. This analysis was obtained from four educators each teaching in the same grade. It illustrated the similarities and differences in the teaching approaches that different educators use in teaching in the Foundation phase. The change perceptions from each educator through the interviews are also discussed.

In Chapter five, the insights and recommendations are described. Some of the major findings are highlighted. One of the major findings was work-shopping of educators when a new curriculum is implemented and how this impacts on teaching and learning of English. The challenge of teaching methods and lesson activities has also been revealed as a major challenge for educators and the need for a variety of activities was discussed. Finally some recommendations for the Department of Education are suggested.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the focus, purpose, objectives, key questions and limitations of the study. This study attempted to outline the changes in curriculum and its impact on teaching and learning. It is envisaged that this study will add to the existing knowledge on curriculum change. In the next chapter, a review of relevant literature is conducted to provide insight how curriculum is defined, the changes and contentions associated with curriculum and the developments in the South African education curriculum, particularly, English literacy for the Foundation phase.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a review of the literature is presented concerning the main contentions about curriculum change (Chisholm, 2005, 2004; Carl, 2004; Jansen, 1999, 1998) and in particular, examines the impact of curriculum change on English literacy and the experiences of educators in Foundation phase. This review tracked curriculum implementation since 1994, highlighted the purpose and benefits of these changes, and critically described and evaluated some of the main issues associated with such changes.

My study, titled, *Exploring the experiences of Foundation Phase educators within a context of a context of curriculum change in English Literacy*, focused on Foundation phase educators and their experiences with curriculum change in English and how this affected their professional functions, their experiences in their daily teaching situation and how they implemented this into their teaching. This was done by attempting to understand their views beliefs, successes and challenges on curriculum change. The methodology by which these views have been obtained are discussed in Chapter 3.

The process of change in education has been the subject of many investigations. According to Chisholm, Motala and Vally (2003) there is “conceptual chaos in the field of education, especially in Foundation phase education, in relation to literacy.” These researchers suggest that curriculum change is a multifaceted and a demanding process and requires thorough planning, sufficient time, finance and opportunities for teacher participation. In this chapter, the components of what constitutes the English curriculum and the Department’s recommendations on how it should be taught in Foundation Phase is described. Since the focus is on the experiences of Foundation Phase educator’s experiences with curriculum change, the English curriculum as given by DOE was interrogated to obtain an enhanced perspective of curriculum implementation in South Africa, and to understand teachers’ experiences with curriculum implementation. The teacher’s understanding of the curriculum will influence how he assists the learners, as Woods and Wenham (1995), assert that the educator plays a pivotal role in a learner’s education. Loreman, Dippelaar and Harvey (2005), highlight the importance of a curriculum as “instrumental to the culture of teaching in schools, it includes issues such as subject matter, pedagogy, assessment/evaluation and related resources involved in the

organization, delivery and articulation of education programmes”. The curriculum is a legal document and forms the basis of learning, it identifies what is expected of the educator in terms of teaching and assessing and everything that needs to be covered in a particular grade.

Education is the imparting of knowledge through a process of “instruction, teaching and training”, (NEPA, 1967 – Act 39 of 1967). The state compels children to attend school for a particular period of time. In terms of the *South African Schools Act of 1996*, schooling is obligatory for children between the ages of 7 and 15. Pre-primary education is accessible for three years but majority of the children just go to school for one year which is due to fees and entry issues. Depending on the exposure children have had to English in these formative years, their abilities to write, speak and respond in English will be affected.

Education is either formal – provided by a school, college, technikon or university; non-formal. This research was conducted within the formal education system and specifically, within a school.

According to Schwartz and Cavener (1994, p.333), “Schools are culture systems of human relationships, traditions, ideas, attitudes and ways of doing things”. It remains a place where teaching and learning occurs. Furthermore, it is the initial place where learners’ behavior and potential educational achievements. The following discussion focuses on the manner in which a curriculum is implemented.

2.2 Curriculum Implementation

Carl, (2002, p. 172), points out that ”successful implementation of a new curriculum depends on the extent to which all consumers are informed and have been prepared for the envisaged change and whether they are also prepared to associate themselves with it”. In other words, the amount of communication of the proposed changes to the teachers, as well the level of their motivation to implement such changes, have important ramifications for how successfully the new curriculum will be adopted.

Curriculum change involves careful planning. Becher (1978) feels that while there may be much planning about curricula, it is often not so easy to implement this in daily practice in a classroom. Woods and Wenham (1995, p. 123) are of an opinion that ‘an overloaded curriculum, oversized classes and inadequate resources’ are detrimental to curriculum implementation.

Carl (2009) proposes that “Curriculum implementation can be considered as a system of engineering that takes design specifications through various channels to the teacher and classroom”

Jordaan and Mostert (1989) also highlights the various stages of implementation which is denoted as macro- and micro-implementation. Macro-implementation is the presentation of policy and curriculum initiatives as laid out at national level by curriculum experts. Micro-implementation is engaged at local levels. Subject teachers engage with the core syllabus at school and develop it further. Owhotu (2009) in a conference in England touched on the micro and macro levels of first and second language curriculum. The macro level represents the policy design level and the micro level is the school-based classroom level. Altrichter (2005) pointed out that if educators felt an innovation was relevant and was important to change their teaching practice, the success of the curriculum increases. At the micro level educators are the change agents and in the macro level, educators must be provided with materials and resources to accomplish this.

When a curriculum is designed, there are a number of frameworks that need to be considered. Emmer and Badenhorst (1997) highlight these important considerations, “human resource development, learner centeredness, relevance, integration, differentiation, redress and learner support, nation building and non –discrimination, critical and creative thinking, flexibility, progression, credibility and quality assurance”.

In the next section, the specific implementation of the language policy by the Department of Education is discussed.

2.3 Language in Education Policy

The *Language in Education Policy* was published in 1997, and clarified in the *Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)* of 2002 (DoE, 2002a). The underlying principle of the policy was to keep the use of home language as the language of learning and teaching (especially in the early years of learning), while providing access to an additional language(s) (Education.gov.za, 2010).

South Africa recognizes eleven languages. According to the Constitution of South Africa (1996)¹, “the official languages of the Republic (of South Africa) are Sepedi, Sesotho,

¹ Chapter 1, section 6[1])

Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu”.

The language policy is directed by values originating from the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (RSA, 1996a) and the *South African Schools Act* (SASA) (RSA, 1996b), which are listed in Table 1. The matter concerning the use of the learner’s mother tongue as a vehicle of instruction remains undecided. In 2007, for Grade 3 learners, English had been the language of learning and teaching (LoLT)². More Grade 3 learners learnt in English as compared to Grades 1 or 2 learners. In 2007, 22% Grade 1 learners learnt in English, 24% in Grade 2 were and 28% in grade 3 (Education gov.za. 2010).

² See Table 2

Table 2: Percentage of Grade 1 learners by language of learning and teaching: 1998 to 2007. Source DBE, LoLT Report, 2010

| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Afrikaans | 5.1 | 6.2 | 7.8 | 6.7 | 9.3 | 8.3 | 9.0 | 8.6 | 7.5 | 9.5 |
| English | 31.7 | 30.3 | 26.3 | 27.7 | 33.9 | 29.3 | 26.3 | 24.6 | 22.3 | 21.8 |
| isiNdebele | 1.0 | 0.6 | 2.0 | 8.0 | 6.0 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.7 | |
| isiXhosa | 16.2 | 18.3 | 39.4 | 28.2 | 14.9 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 16.3 | 15.9 | 16.5 |
| isiZulu | 17.0 | 19.3 | 12.9 | 15.1 | 15.1 | 23.1 | 22.8 | 23.4 | 24.1 | 23.4 |
| Sepedi | 8.7 | 7.2 | 1.3 | 5.9 | 6.7 | 6.2 | 7.5 | 8.0 | 9.4 | 8.3 |
| Sesotho | 5.7 | 5.7 | 4.6 | 5.7 | 5.7 | 5.1 | 5.0 | 4.8 | 5.0 | 4.7 |
| Setswana | 8.8 | 8.4 | 5.5 | 4.9 | 8.4 | 6.6 | 6.7 | 6.8 | 7.6 | 7.5 |
| Siswati | 0.0 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 2.1 |
| Tshivenda | 2.3 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 1.6 | 1.9 | 1.7 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 2.1 | 2.2 |
| Xitsonga | 3.5 | 2.6 | 0.4 | 2.2 | 2.5 | 2.26 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 3.4 | 3.1 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 3: Percentage of Grade 2 learners by language of learning and teaching: 1998 to 2007. Source: DBE, LoLT Report, 2010

| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Afrikaans | 5.7 | 6.8 | 8.9 | 7.8 | 10.8 | 9.0 | 9.3 | 9.5 | 7.9 | 9.6 |
| English | 35.3 | 35.7 | 31.2 | 30.5 | 37.6 | 33.8 | 29.9 | 27.3 | 24.6 | 23.8 |
| isiNdebele | 1.0 | 0.6 | 0.2 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| isiXhosa | 12.5 | 14.1 | 31.9 | 25.2 | 12.3 | 13.0 | 13.8 | 14.9 | 13.8 | 15.0 |
| isiZulu | 15.7 | 16.8 | 12.8 | 14.9 | 12.0 | 20.7 | 21.6 | 20.8 | 22.1 | 21.7 |
| Sepedi | 8.7 | 7.1 | 1.6 | 5.8 | 6.8 | 6.0 | 7.2 | 7.9 | 10.5 | 9.1 |
| Sesotho | 5.5 | 6.2 | 4.8 | 5.8 | 6.3 | 4.8 | 5.1 | 5.0 | 4.9 | 4.8 |
| Setswana | 9.6 | 9.0 | 6.9 | 4.6 | 8.1 | 7.1 | 6.9 | 6.8 | 7.7 | 7.4 |
| Siswati | 0.0 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 1.8 | 1.9 | 2.1 |
| Tshivenda | 2.4 | 0.5 | 0.1 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.4 |
| Xitsonga | 3.4 | 2.6 | 0.4 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 2.7 | 3.0 | 3.6 | 3.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 4: Percentage of Grade 3 Learners by Language of Learning and Teaching: 1998 to 2007- Source: DBE, LoLT Report, 2010

LoLT Percentage of Learners by Year

| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Afrikaans | 6.7 | 7.3 | 10.0 | 8.1 | 10.4 | 9.9 | 9.4 | 9.3 | 8.4 | 9.9 |
| English | 40.9 | 40.6 | 36.0 | 36.5 | 44.7 | 38.1 | 35.5 | 33.3 | 29.1 | 27.7 |
| isiNdebele | 1.0 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| isiXhosa | 10.9 | 12.5 | 28.2 | 21.4 | 10.1 | 12.7 | 12.4 | 12.6 | 12.2 | 14 |
| isiZulu | 12.9 | 14.5 | 10.7 | 12.9 | 10.3 | 16.8 | 19.2 | 20.1 | 20.0 | 20.1 |
| Sepedi | 8.0 | 6.3 | 1.4 | 5.3 | 6.1 | 5.8 | 6.6 | 6.9 | 10.2 | 9.2 |
| Sesotho | 5.0 | 5.8 | 5.0 | 5.3 | 6.0 | 4.8 | 4.7 | 4.6 | 4.8 | 4.4 |
| Setswana | 9.4 | 9.1 | 6.8 | 5.0 | 7.1 | 6.5 | 6.8 | 6.7 | 7.1 | 6.8 |
| siSwati | 0.0 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 1.3 | 1.5 | 1.7 |
| Tshivenda | 1.9 | 0.4 | 0.1 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| Xitsong | 3.1 | 2.4 | 0.5 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 3.4 | 3.1 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Between the years from 1998 to 2007, there was a noticeable decrease in the percentage of Grade 3 learners that were learning in English, from 40.9% to 27.7%. and an increase in the number learning in Afrikaans (from 6.7% to 9.9%) , isiZulu (12.9% to 20.1%), and isiXhosa (10.9% to 14%).

According to the DoE's Language in Education Policy, the learner's first language, especially in the Foundation Phase, must be used for teaching and learning, (Grades R–3) (DoE, 1997), highlighting the nation's multilingual education policy. Up to 2011, learners from Grade 3 and above needed to study in one additional language but in 2012 this changed when Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was introduced and from Grade 1 learners had to learn an additional language.

Referring to Draft language policy for Foundation Phase of the Western Cape Education Department, it is observed therein that a rationale for teaching Languages is "to enable learners to communicate effectively" (SA, 2002b, p. 26). To be able to read and transcribe is a fundamental skill of any education strategy, and the teaching of languages facilitates a growth in the direction of the analytical and developmental conclusions, it is also the backbone of Education

2.4 Literacy

A recent UNESCO report (2004, p.13), suggests the following meaning of *literacy*: "Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning, enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their potential, fully in their community and wider society".

Possibly the modest and most limited meaning of Literacy is the skill to be literate and to transliterate in a language. According to Harris and Associates (1973, cited in Heath, 1986, p. 15), a survey was carried out for the National Reading Council, literacy was expressed as "the ability to respond to practical tasks of daily life ". This definition of Literacy enables people to realize their own purposes and cultivate their potential. Dr Kader Asmal who was the Minister of Education, wrote, "140 million people in sub-Saharan Africa cannot read or write".

Prinsloo and Bloch (2001) assert that literacy is "a key to the construction of successful educational careers for children". A survey that was carried out by the National Department of Education on Literacy in 2003, showed that Grade 3 literacy levels were less than 40%. This disturbing statistic suggests that unless children learn to become literate and transcribe at

the appropriate age, which is either six or seven years, they are unlikely to learn as they advance.

According to the Assessments from the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) in 2000 to 2002, “only 44% of learners in 14 countries achieved a minimal level of literacy by Grade 6 and only 14.6% of learners achieved the national standard for literacy by Grade 6”.

2.4.1 Reading and Writing – How do children learn

According to Cambourne (1988, p.1) “children acquire early facility with oral and written language most easily when certain conditions are present in their environments, both at home and school”. Cambourne (1988) proposed eight circumstances for literacy improvement which helps children acquire language and literacy in pleasing and significant approaches:

- Immersion—Children are involved in stimulating and thought provoking books, labels, newspapers, magazines and charts.
- Demonstration- replicate reading and writing.
- Engagement—children are helped to become prospective readers and writers.
- Expectation—prospective developments for language and literacy growth.
- Responsibility— children become accountable for their choice of books to read.
- Approximation—Accept children’s mistakes and congratulate their achievements.
- Use—Use oral and written language usefully and significantly.
- Response—Pay attention to children’s comments and questions, and provide enrichment work for their oral and written language.

These eight stages of implementation were supported by research carried out by a group of teachers and students at the Universidad de Antioquia, Columbia (2011). They utilized Cambourne’s conditions for learning to improve their use of English as a foreign language and their pedagogical practices.

Cambourne (1998) points out that children learn in different ways according to their learning styles. When children learn to read, they progress through various stages, initially they learn by exploring. As they grow older they learn through repetition and anticipation. When children hear the stories often they begin to develop their understanding of connected events.

Thereafter, children begin to understand that the pictures have a meaning and purpose, and learn to identify and match the words. In the final stage they focus on the meaning of the words and begin to question what certain things mean. Woknik discussed Cambourne's stages in her article regarding reading. She highlighted that during reading intervention teachers should consider Cambourne's conditions. These classes should have interesting books, educators should read aloud daily to learners, they should be encouraged to become responsible for their reading and should read together and discuss what they read.

Furthermore teachers assist to improve literacy logically by embracing a range of prospects for interpretation and scribing in the classroom. The type of materials used is also important. Big Books are A3 sized or larger, with large, clear, uncluttered illustrations that help the learners understand what is said in the text. The print is large and easily readable by the group (Rodriquez, 2013).. 'Big Books' provide learners with an opportunity to participate in the reading experience as a group, in a relaxed, informal and non-threatening way (WorldPress.com). Reading material can also include pamphlets and posters on topics of interest to the learner (Tungesh, 2012). Paired reading provide learners with an immediate opportunity to experience reading, reading together with the teacher, hence reading is meaningful and enjoyable.

Teachers design resource hubs in the classroom where learners can peruse through diverse printed materials at various stages of difficulty. Learners should have the opportunity to regularly listen to the educator or other learners read. When learners interact with questions about the texts, they begin to develop their comprehension and analytical thinking abilities. There are various activities that assist the learner to focus on reading for accuracy. When they write new symbols and words, spelling activities and dictation they develop this accuracy.

Phonics and sound-symbols activities give learners the skills needed to decode unfamiliar vocabulary. Plenty of opportunity should be made available to learners to practice word building. Mercado (1991) explains a venture with African American and Hispanic 6th graders in New York whereby students in collaboration with other students, the teacher, and other resources handle and provide demonstrations on research. Literacy develops as a major segment of learning in Mercado's project who suggests that initial results divulge "dramatic gains in reading skills" (1991,p. 183). Likewise, Moll (1992, p. 21) inspires educators to

arrange for “authentic literacy practices, “ to utilize literacy as an instrument for “inquiry, communication, and thinking” and debates the worthy of encompassing the community and parents.

2.5 Curriculum Change

2.5.1 Tracking change through the years

Curriculum reform is an ongoing national project. According to Webber (2008), in South Africa, education is intensely contested, with multifaceted overlying subjects, and competing divergent agendas. Educational transformation in South Africa is intensely chronological and constitutional. The occurrences in education can be closely linked to developments in the world and also in the nation, Apartheid schooling was introduced in the 1950s. For two decades this had been the case, until the student revolt in 1976 began a process for the attainment of majority rule in 1994. Many changes were introduced into education. Learners could be enrolled at any school. The National Education and Training Forum thus began revising the South African syllabus.

Goodson and Marsch (1996) debated curriculum transformation in Europe and how this has traditionally and in present day society been reinforced by societal and constitutional relations beyond the confines of school. They also compared the position of the curriculum in 1904 in Britain to the National Curriculum of the 1980s. Even in South Africa, the curriculum faced changes due to the political standing of the country.

A mutual theme when discussing educational transformation has been on analyzing how educational transformation transforms into practice. According to Motala and Pampallis (1992, p. 369), who contend that focusing on education or on the “problematization and analysis of implementation by itself is inadequate” because it does not consider the confines enforced by the past and the environment. They are analytical of “the expectation that educational interventions alone (through policy reform) can resolve the legacy of hundreds of years of colonial and racist rule, since it attributes to educational policy powers of intervention which lie outside its range of possibilities” (p. 370). They appreciate that there has been some progress in the development since 1994, however they claim that “the problems remain”.

Fullan and Pomfret (1977) researched matters of curriculum distribution, execution and issues defining their accomplishments in 16 case studies in American schools. They

discovered that almost all were entirely unsuccessful. For approximately two eras, academics have continued to study the occurrence of educational transformation, deliberate its features and causes, list the abilities of the 'change agent' and propose methods for its improvement McBeath, (1997, p. 53-67). Historically Fullan and Pomfret have researched matters regarding curriculum, however recently there have been numerous research articles regarding this. Fullan (2007) proposed that effective implementation of change was the result of long term commitment. Meaning was shared and understood , by educators in the classroom and to school districts. Otunga, Odera and Barasa, (2011) curriculum change occurs on a minor, medium and major level. Minor changes encompasses the sequence of subject content or learning activities or the addition of a topic or method to the instructional program. Medium changes can incorporate the assimilation of subjects or a new subject or approach to the existing subject. Major changes affect the content, method , approach, materials of the curriculum.

In South Africa, we have been faced with the similar scenario. Although the Department of education has tried to sort out the inequalities in the curriculum, they have not been very successful. Recent research indicate that there are loopholes. The Kwa-Zulu DOE (2012), conducted visits to 12 education districts in the province to assess progress with the implementation of the curriculum in schools. They discovered that there is poor learner performance, lack of monitoring of schools, poor time on task, poor supervision by School Management Teams (SMT's), disjuncture in curriculum management and policy implementation, lack of common strategy to deal with the challenge of absenteeism, job vacancies that impact on curriculum delivery, lack of content knowledge among teachers and teacher quality and qualifications (KZN Department of Education, 2012).

In the following paragraphs, I provide a detailed history of the curriculum changes in South Africa, which formed an important background to the responses of the participants in my study. Since 1994, the Ministry of Education has implemented five National Curricula. The first minister of education, Professor Sibusiso Bhengu (1994 – 1997) tried to redress the inequalities in schools and democratize education. In 1994 the National Education and Training Forum revised the syllabus. A comprehensive curriculum project, Curriculum 2005, was the initial main curriculum policy that was introduced. Essentially, this curriculum was learner-centered and the teacher was a facilitator. It focused on learning outcomes and

formative assessment. The curriculum presented novel skills, values, knowledge and attitudes for every South African and was the most noteworthy educational transformation.

Curriculum 2005 was launched in Cape Town on 24 March 1997 by Professor Kader Asmal who was the Minister of Education then (Jansen, 1999). Subsequently, C2005 was implemented in Grade 1 in January 1998 (Jansen and Taylor, 2003, p.38), in Grades 2 and 7 during 1999, Grades 3 and 8 in 2000, Grades 4 and 9 in 2001, Grades 5 and 10 in 2002, Grades 6 and 11 in 2003 and Grade 12 in 2006 (de Villiers, 2011).

C2005 encompassed outcome-based education (OBE). It consisted of eight analytical learning outcomes and 66 specific outcomes specifying the necessary knowledge, skills, and values for learning (DOE, 1997b). All teaching and learning had to emphasize the learning outcomes that learners must exhibit after being educated for a while, C2005 Review document.

According to Jansen and Christie (1999), after the curriculum was put forth in January 1998 into Grade 1, teachers were not properly trained, or competent and confident to work with this difficult curriculum, resources were not properly distributed among schools, examinations lacked control and there was a serious lack of learning materials that supported this curriculum.

Professor Kader Asmal accepted these flaws in C2005's design and content, and reviewed the curriculum (Asmal, 2000). The Curriculum Review Committee met in May 2000 and verified the problems, and added some extra findings. They focused on three main areas: the confusing jargon of C2005, weakness of the design features and inadequate teacher training. (Review Committee report, 2000). Van Rooyen and Prinsloo (2003, p.89) identified the following problems "only some educators and officials understood the difficult system, there were structure and design flaws in the curriculum. The curriculum and assessment policy did not match, teachers were not work-shopped properly, textbooks were unavailable and the implementation was rushed and there was no continuous support ".

An evaluation and monitoring report compiled by the National Department of Education³ (Department of Education, 1997) summarized the practical problems experienced with the implementation of OBE.

Singh (1999, p. 19) highlighted the following problems:

- Learning materials were not relevant to learners' own experience.
- Not all materials were made available in the home language of the learners.
- Multi-grade and multi-lingual classrooms caused classroom management problems.
- Group interactions were not effective enough.
- More time and training is required for assessment and group work.
- Problems were experienced with the learner support material; teachers were afraid of new methods and therefore needed more training.
- Teachers needed more training in reporting and recording.
- Learners' numbers were too large.
- Disciplinary problems.
- Shortage of resources.
- Teachers needed more motivation and support.

The Minister revised Curriculum 2005 (C2005) in 2000. Some of the onerous language was removed and a modest and manageable curriculum framework was created. This led to the creation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement. This was approved on 15 April 2002 and implemented in 2004, starting with Grade R. The RNCS afforded parameters on what should be taught from Grades R to 9. It detailed the essential outcomes and the principles used to evaluate whether learners had attained these outcomes.

The following amendments were effected in Curriculum 2005:

- The Revised National Curriculum Statement to be presented within the convenient time structures.
- The RNCS consisted of four main design features.
- Curriculum aligned with assessment.

³ Called *National Evaluation and Monitoring of the Trial of Curriculum 2005 and OBE in Provincial Pilot Schools in South Africa*

- Eradication of confusing terminology.
- Introduction of learning area statements and assessment standards, (Van Rooyen and Prinsloo, 2003, p.17)

The RNCS was phased in from 2004 (Grades R, 1, 2, 3), in 2005 (Grades 4, 5, 6), in 2006 (Grade 7), in 2007 (Grade 8) and in 2008 (Grade 9).

According to the report by the National Department of Education, the question arose as to whether this succession of curriculum reforms were maintainable over a period of time, that is, to what degree were these curriculum reforms intensely embedded within schools' lifespan, culture, and organization? There was plenty of evidence that the curriculum was unsustainable for the following reasons: the complexity of C2005 alienated teachers' working conditions and pedagogical obligations and did not support the curriculum; the training program was feeble and irregular, and had a serious design flaw, training was merely a distribution of information rather than empowering educators and many schools across the country were unable to effectively implement the curriculum (Asmal, 2000).

Curriculum C2005 was phased into the different grades since 1998. The updated version of C2005 had by now encountered numerous difficulties, prior to its implementation in 2002. The updated curriculum had generated substantial misunderstandings among educators.

According to Jansen (1998) in countries like Australia, Scotland, New Zealand, Canada and portions of America where OBE was implemented, it was heavily criticized and fraught with controversies. OBE was enforced upon South Africa from the West without considering the effects it would have on our education system. Jansen (1997) in his article "Why Outcomes-based Education will fail: An Elaboration" outlined ten reasons why he considered this curriculum to be inappropriate for schools. He had taken a radical stance, but in retrospect he was correct.

2.6 Literacy issues

Several studies have been undertaken to explain the changes in curriculum. The *South African National Department of Education's Draft Assessment Policy for General Education and Training Phase Grade R to 9*, (2001a) allowed for systemic evaluations to be conducted

nationally. It played a significant function in elucidating the weaknesses and the data that was gathered was used to advise a multiplicity of policy modifications.

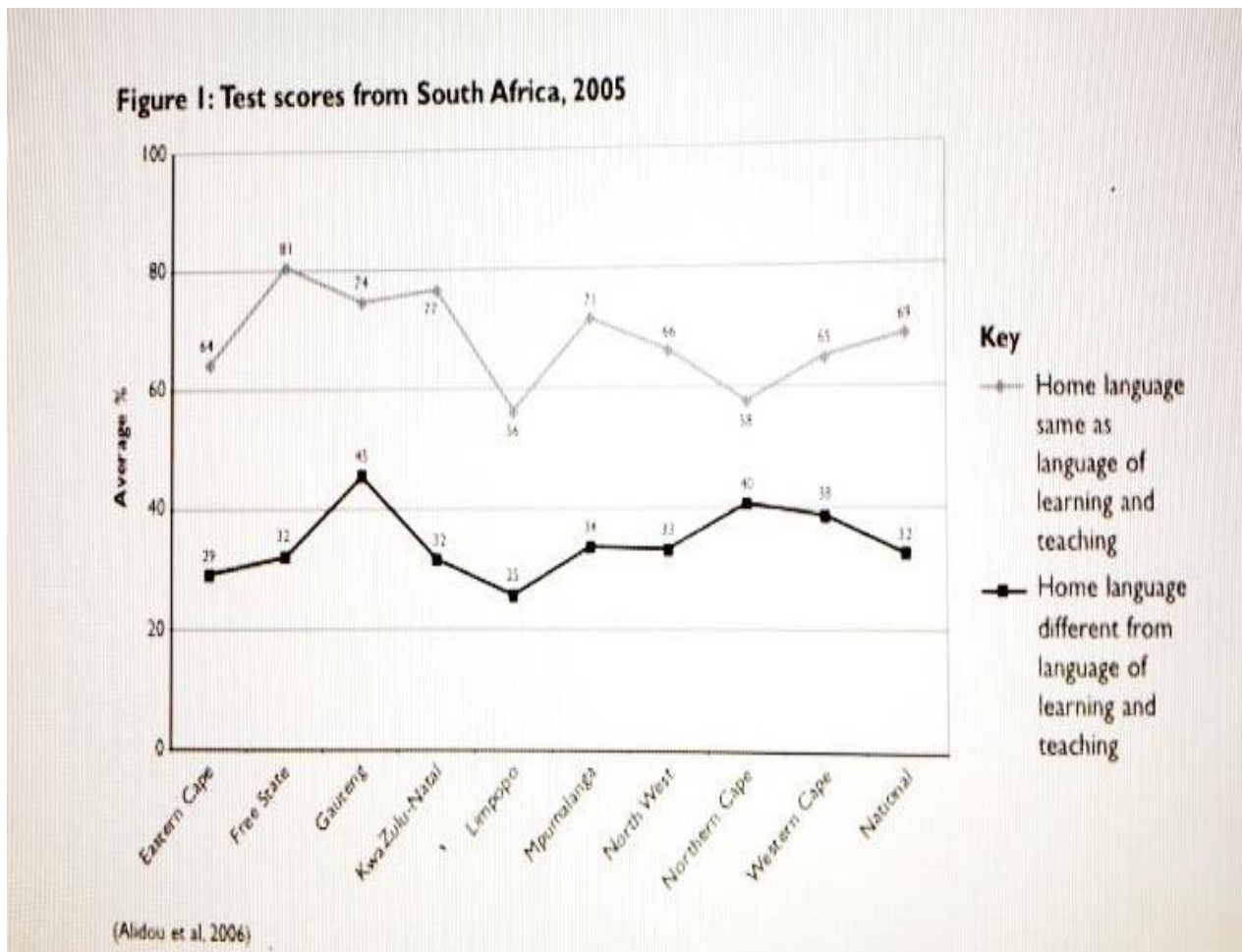
In the Western Cape Department of Education, Grade 3 Systemic evaluation (2002), it was reported that only 43% of learners achieved 50% on the Literacy tasks. In the final report in February 2003, 32.2% of Grade 3 learners were performing at Grade 3 literacy level, 8% could not read single words, 18.3% were performing at Grade 1 level, 12.5% were reading at Grade 2 level and 29% were achieving between Grade 2 and Grade 3 level. Since then, results have further deteriorated, as demonstrated by the Systemic Evaluation results between 2004 and 2005 of Grade 3 Literacy results.

Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003, p.41) stated that: “literacy and numeracy studies conducted in South Africa from 1998 to 2002 indicate that learners’ scores are far below what is expected at all levels of the schooling system, both in relation to other countries (including other developing countries) and in relation to the expectations of the South African curriculum.”

In Africa, teaching children in a language they do not use in daily life has been demonstrated to have a poor success rate in terms of children’s literacy and fluency in that language, their competency in other areas of learning, and their competency in their first language (Williams, 1998, Alidou *et al*, 2006).

Figure 1 presents the regional-level scores from the 2005 Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation tests in Mathematics, language and Science in South Africa. It illustrates the huge gap between children who learn in their home language and children who learn in an additional language at school.

Figure 1: 2005 Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation Test scores adapted (from Alidou *et al*, 2006, p. 17).



Nearly 12 years later, illiteracy is still the priority in education in Africa. In 2008, the Department of Education, under the direction of the former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, embarked on a four year Foundations for Learning Campaign (Government Gazette, 30880). It was envisaged that the average performance levels of learners in Grades 1 to 6 will be raised by 50% by 2011.

In a newspaper article, Education MEC, Barbara Creecy (Khumalo, *BUA News*, 2010) was quoted as saying that “government research has shown that majority of learners in the Gauteng province were unable to read or write at the required levels required by the National Curriculum.” She also pointed out that several tests conducted locally and globally illustrate,

that our pupils' results in Numeracy and Literacy are declining. She also added that, "in order to develop a skilled workforce needed to grow the economy, learner performance needed to be improved especially in Foundation Phase."

Prinsloo (2008, p.60) also commented that "the period from 5 years to 10 years is critical in the development of children's reading, writing and thinking skills. This coincides with teaching and learning in the foundation phase (Grade R– 3) and continues into the Intermediate phase (Grades 4 – 6). All further learning rests on these foundations, which should enable children to reach their full potential and function effectively in society."

Jane Hofmeyer (*Business Day* on 2nd September 2010), wrote about the changing curricula. She highlights the origins of OBE. Politicians wanted to overcome apartheid education curriculum. Trade unions and businesses wanted there to be a link between the knowledge, skills and qualifications with the actual jobs. Educational departments wanted there to be an outcome of what was taught. Thus, the National Qualifications framework, was established in 1995. After, Curriculum 2005 was reviewed, it was discovered that there was not enough concentration upon content and knowledge. Although RNCS proved to be more effective, it too failed. Most teachers could not deliver the curriculum. According to Mary, "*teachers were overloaded and there was too much of technical jargon.*"

In 2012, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy statement (CAPS) was effected in Grades 1, 2, 3 and 10, Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, stated⁴ (2011), that the policy will include textbooks and workbooks and every child will have access to a book in each subject. In 2013, the curriculum implementation was aimed at Grades 4, 5, 6 and 11. In the Foundation phase the learning areas consist of English, Mathematics and Lifeskills. In the following discussion, the Progress in Reading study and the Annual National Assessments are discussed.

2. 7 Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

The Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is a global testing of reading literacy which consisted of 38 countries. According to Mullis, Kennedy, Martin and Sainsbury (2004), PIRLS concentrated on three aspects of learners' reading literacy, namely: 1) comprehension

⁴in her address to the Consultative Conference of the National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGBs) in Johannesburg on the 3rd November 2011

methods, which includes focusing and retrieving information, making candid conclusions , interpreting and integrating beliefs and facts and examining and evaluating content, 2) language and textual elements and 3) purposeful reading and reading performances and approaches concerning reading. The outcome of a PIRLS experimental study involving Grade 4 learners in 2005, indicated that learners had reading difficulties.

In 2006, the report also indicated that the home, learners and school determined the accomplishment of the initial Literacy development. The PIRLS test in 2006 indicated that South Africa had lower literacy levels than all other countries.

The table below indicates the ratio of Grade learners’ reading performance. Even though South Africa’s value was the lowest, Kuwait and Qatar were experiencing similar problems. This indicated that this problem of low achieving results is a worldwide one.

Table 5: Low reading benchmark in 2006 PIRLS⁵- (adapted from Mullis, Martin, Kennedy and Foy (2006, p.70)

| Participating country | % of learners |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Indonesia | 54 |
| Iran | 60 |
| Kuwait | 28 |
| Morocco | 26 |
| Qatar | 33 |
| South Arica | 22 |
| United States | 96 |

According to the PIRLS report, the United States of America, achieves good results, but this could be better.

Also, in 2011, an innovative PIRLS evaluation was introduced for countries that did not perform satisfactory. This new study (pre-PIRLS) made provision for learners underachieving countries to perform at a different level. In South Africa, almost 20 000 grades 4 and 5 pupils from 400 schools were involved in PIRLS 2011. South African Grade 4 pupils contributed to the pre-PIRLS test.45 countries participated in this test. Hong Kong

⁵See the PIRLS 2006 report at <http://timss.bc.edu> (p. 70).

SAR, Finland, Singapore and the Russian Federation were top achieving countries. In addition, 10 countries improved their reading achievement levels between 2001 and 2011.

South African Grade 4 African languages learners, attained below the global center point although their test was easier. The Reading level of all learners was also very poor. The results in the PIRLS tests emphasizes the need for reading instruction exercises that focus on the complications in language and reading in primary school. For children to be successful, they have to become useful readers or they will fail significantly in primary school and drop out at secondary level. Hence, reading levels must be carefully monitored and supervised.

2.8 Annual National Assessments

According to the report on the Annual National Assessments (ANA), the ANA examinations is a countrywide assessment tool in English and Mathematics for Grades 1 to 6 and grade 9. It tests the level of performance of learners in these grades for English and Mathematics. The ANA examinations have been written since 2011, it is “one of the initiatives that form the backbone of the DBE's *Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025.*” (DoE, 2014, p.1).

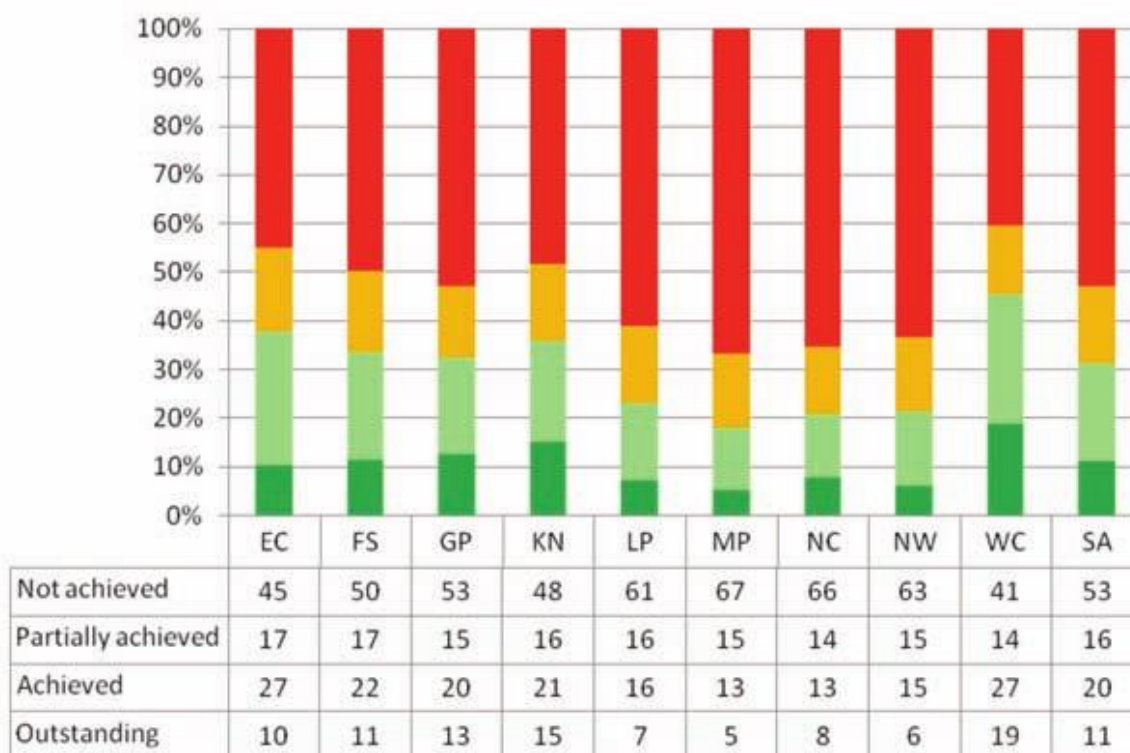
The focal point in ANA is to construct a conclusive contribution with regards to improved learning in schools. Four crucial areas of influence at school and district levels have been acknowledged: ANA should enthuse educators to test learners by means of suitable standards and approaches; ANA should inspire better support systems for schools; ANA should inspire schools to applaud its successes and ANA should inspire greater parental involvement (DoE, 2013, p. 5).

These tests were written from 2011. After the 2011 results, a National Strategy was executed by the department of basic education. The approach presented systems, processes and procedures that focused on improving classroom exercises and learner accomplishments. ANA tests exemplars were made available to educators so as to expose them to the different questioning techniques. Marking guidelines and a scope of work was also included.

In the Annual National Assessments (ANA) (2011), the tests revealed that the Literacy level was still very low. This is a major challenge on the Curriculum and is of concern to policy makers and educators. The key point of a Literacy Learning Programme is to guarantee that

when learners are communicating either verbally or in print they should be capable of processing evidence, communicating thoughts and information, liaisons between themselves and society, retrieving information, be imaginative. Furthermore, the “Literacy Learning Programme consists of the following Learning Outcomes: Listening, Speaking, Reading and View, Writing, Thinking and Reasoning and Language Structure and Use” (DoE, 2003, p. 20). The following table illustrates the poor performance of grade 3 learners.

Table 6: Literacy Performance of Grade 3– Department of Education



According to the ANA Report, the above results were in close collaboration with the 2007 Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation results, “the Grade 3 literacy level was 47%, the 2007 Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation was 48%” (DoE, 2011, p.30). The main general finding is that in 2011, learner performance was constantly low. “The Grade 3 literacy level was 47%, the 2007 Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation was 48%” (DoE, 2011, p.30).

It was envisaged that with the implementation of the CAPS curriculum, educators would be responsible to choose suitable reading resources that would successfully support learners, for example, graded readers are vital for group reading, and library books and magazines are needed to stimulate independent reading. CAPS is very specific in affording educators with instructional tactics for two weeks. The CAPS documents provide specific guidelines and timelines, and indicates the duration that reading activities should follow (DoE, 2011b, p. 13). Workbooks proved to be an important resource for learners and educators. The tests covered work that was done in the classroom. The results in the ANA tests for grade 3, showed a slight improvement. Unfortunately, for hundreds of learners in the Eastern Cape,

the workbooks were not delivered timeously. Van Vuuren (2012)⁶, highlights the plight of these learners. These shortages were also prevalent in 2012 during school visits. Learners also received the incorrect workbooks from grades R to 7⁷. This disadvantaged the learners especially since the new curriculum, CAPS, was implemented. In a report written by Outhred, Beavis, Stubberfield, Wilkinson, Murphy and Kelly, (2013, p.12) it was noted that the “optimal use of the workbooks, ANA and CAPS are seen to be the three priorities that will drive improvements in the Basic Education sector in South Africa.”

The ANA results in 2014 showed an improvement in the education system. In an article by Matshediso (2014), the Basic Education Minister Angie Monshekga was reported to have commented that the “department has managed to exceed the presidential target of 60% in both literacy and numeracy at grade 3 level.”

2.9 Reading stages

Reading is an important skill that we acquire. Most of our understanding and information is achieved from brochures, books, newspapers, instruction manuals, magazines, pamphlets, brochures and other print media. According to Jeanne Chall (1983, p.2), “the learning and uses of literacy are among the most advanced forms of intelligence, and, compared to other forms, depend more on instruction and practice”. Chall (1983) describes six reading stages: during birth to kinder-garden, parents “read” to children. They name objects, color books and read easy books. By the end of this stage, children know the alphabet and can write their names; between grades 1 and 2, children sound and recognize words; in grades 2 and 3, their fluency levels are expanded. They now learn to actually read books, emulating their speed, fluency and pronunciation; during grades 4 to 8, they read unseen books and texts; in high school, they read different genres of reading and finally during college and adulthood, they pace their reading and read for their own reasons. Chall’s research benefitted literacy and other researchers. Anglin (2008) used Chall’s three stages: pre-school, Kindergarten to Grade 2 and Grade 3-4 to improve literacy skills and children’s learning. Hoffman and Goodman (2009) described literacy, literacy acquisition and the teaching of literacy. Flora

⁶ Edmund van Vuuren, Member of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature (MPL) and the Democratic Spokesperson, concerning the Eastern Cape school workbook shortages.

⁷ “Learning without Books”, Report on an investigation into alleged shortages and incorrect supply of workbooks by the National Department of Basic Education to Eastern Cape schools, Report No 19 of 2013/2014-Public Protector, ADV. T Madonsela

(2012) focused on identifying children with dyslexia, language intervention strategies and the importance of developing pre-phonemic and phonemic awareness.

According to The Handbook for Reading, (DBE a, 2008), Phonemic awareness is of paramount importance in reading. Hence children are taught these skills from Grade R. Reading difficulty arises when children are unable to blend letters to construct words. Children associate the letters with the sounds. The main reason for being unable to read is difficulty in decrypting written words into their individual spoken language. Instructional actions that highlight phonemic awareness can accelerate development in reading. It helps to also increase their reading speed (DBE, 2008a).

2.10 Reading Programme Initiatives

In 2008, the Department of Basic Education launched a reading programme which was designed to assist teachers deliver the content of the curriculum in an integrated, learner-centered way. The CAPS document also refers to this programme. A well-adjusted Language Programme is a method in language and literacy teaching and learning which shows educators how to teach the curriculum content effectively. The programme uses different teaching and learning methodologies, each with a specific purpose which is centered around a text. According to the Department of Education the methodologies are: Shared Reading, Shared Writing, Word and sentence Level Work, Group Reading, Guided Reading, Independent Reading, Independent Writing, Reading Aloud and DAR (reading for enjoyment, sustained silent reading) (DoE, 2008a, p. 3).

The features of a Balanced Language Programme is based on texts, for example, Big Books, story books, a textbook page or chapter, chalkboard work, a chart, a newspaper article, or a group reader, integrates speaking, listening, reading, writing, thinking and language use; balances explicit teaching with learner practices so that there are both teacher-led and learner-centered activities daily; ensures learners are reading and writing daily; moves learners towards becoming independent readers and writers through careful scaffolding and support and ensures success which is motivational to both teachers and learners.

In the Teachers Handbook to teaching Reading (DoE,2008, p. 9), the different stages in reading was highlighted, namely “the pre-reader, the emergent reader, the early reader, the developing reader, the early fluent reader and the independent reader”. These stages given

above provide practical guidelines in assessing the levels of learners reading. They also provide assessment tools for reading.

2.11 Mother Tongue Education

Benjamins (2005, p.14) state that “the general usage of the term 'mother tongue' denotes not only the language one learns from one's mother, but also the speaker's dominant and home language, i.e. not only the first language according to the time of acquisition, but the first with regard to its importance and the speaker's ability to master its linguistic and communicative aspects”.

Mother tongue instruction generally refers to the use of the learners' mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Additionally, it can refer to L1 as a subject of instruction. It is considered to be an important component of quality education, particularly in the early years. The expert view is that mother tongue instruction should cover both the teaching of and the teaching through this language.

In 2008 UNESCO managed research across 26 countries which showed that greater than 50 percent of students who gave up their studies did not learn in their mother tongue (Smits; Huisman and Kruijff - UNESCO, 2008). This is supported by The World Bank, approximating that this affects a partial of the 75 million primary school-aged children (UNESCO, 2008). Statistics obtained from Africa, where children in many countries learn in a second language from Grade 1 or from Grades 3 and 4, propose that language is connected to under achievement. The following discussion focuses on the conceptual framework that was chosen for this study.

2.12 Conceptual Framework

According to Lankshear and Knobel, (2006a p. 64), literacies is defined as “socially recognized ways of generating, communicating and negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded texts within contexts of participation in resources”.

James Gee (1996), described literacy as a social practice. This concept strongly influenced literacy studies and was absorbed into “new literacy studies”

According to Lanshear (1996) “theoretical, pedagogical and research activity concerned with aspects of reading and writing have continued uninterrupted throughout this century within

education". A large amount of this has been directed into understanding, interpreting, inscription, spelling and grasping knowledge as cognitive and behavioral processes in order to develop education and studying.

According to Green (1993) "Literacy studies" has developed as a broad theme for varied activities in research and scholarship largely concerned with "understanding and enhancing the production, reception and transmission of texts". Significant work has commenced at numerous boundaries concerning literacy, English as a discipline in school and curriculum theory and practice. Lankshear (1996) asserts the new literacy studies grounded on this difference between "traditional" impression of literacy as interpretation and writing and the abreast impression of literacy as a "sociocultural practice".

Gee makes two vital points. Firstly he recognizes literacy as a sample of a "socially contested term" (Gee, 1996 p. 123). Secondly, he claims that theories and beliefs indicate social action and the preservation and formation of social words.

"New Literacy Studies" signifies a first-hand look at the nature of literacy, centering not so considerably on achievement of skills, but somewhat on what it means to process literacy as a social practice.

The dispute regarding social literacies implies that interacting with literacy is continually a social act even from the beginning (Street, 1995, p. 2). The manner in which educators and their pupils intermingle is already a social routine that has an effect on the kind of literacy being studied and the opinions about literacy that is understood by the contributors, particularly the new pupils and their view in regards to control. Children, actively learn from people and society around them. Educators facilitate their learning by engaging learners in interesting and fruitful learning experiences. They provide activities that will stimulate learners to ask questions and engage in discussions and talk about their experiences.

Hull and Schultz (2001) are the leading scholars to openly share understandings from New Literacy Studies to educational practice and policy. They expand upon the initial explanations of out-of-school literacy incidents and practices established within New Literacy Studies, and focus again at the associations between in and out of school, so that New Literacy Studies is not just viewed as "anti-school" or attentive only in tiny scale or "local" literacies of resistance. They particularly want to utilize the understandings of children's emergent experiences with literacy in their individual cultural settings to focus on

comprehensive educational questions about studying literacy and of interchanging between the literacy practices that are essential in diverse contexts.

Diverging from this attitude they strongly focus on the work in New Literacy Studies, they argue for an "overlap or complementary or perhaps a respectful division of labor". They quote Dewey's dispute that we can learn extensively about effective teachings and curricula by "foregrounding the relationship between formal education and ordinary life".

From the child's position Dewey perceived, the excessive waste in the school comes from "the child's inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside of the school in any complete and freeway within the school itself; while on the other hand, he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning in school" (Dewey, 1998, pp. 76-78).

In Australia, Queensland, Freebody and Luke (2002), are accredited for providing influential examples on curriculum and assessment and contributing to new theoretical perspectives on literacy. Educators were cognizant that there were changes between the old and new curriculum. The core issue in this study was how educators experienced these changes. For educators to effectively put these changes into practice they needed to understand why these changes were necessary.

2.13 Conclusion

In this chapter a selection of both, international literature and South African literature were reviewed, establishing that curriculum implementation is very complex and has massive implications for teaching and learning. Several definitions about curriculum were described, highlighting the need for structure, implementation and the need for educators to be clear about requirements about curricula to be able to successfully implement changes. In this regard an annotated history of the changes in the South African curriculum since 1994 to the present were described and the contestations and difficulties of implementation emphasized. Cohen and Ball (1998) highlighted the vibrant connection that occurs among curriculum materials, teachers and students, indicating that every individual element is vital for effective instruction but that not a single one functions independently of the other. The curriculum and teaching materials are not separated but rather "influence instructional capacity by constraining or enabling students and teacher's opportunities to learn and teach" (Cohen and Ball, 1998, p.4).

In the next chapter I will discuss the Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study which is located at Primary school in Phoenix, Durban, explores the experiences of Foundation Phase educators within a context of Curriculum Change in Literacy (English, home language). I have opted for the use of a qualitative study using an interpretivist paradigm. In this chapter I discuss the choice of the paradigm and the reasons for using a case study. Using a purposive sampling strategy, I approached educators to participate in semi structured interviews. In this chapter, other methods of data gathering, viz. observation of lessons and documentary analysis are also described, and the issues of trustworthiness and ethics are also discussed.

3.2. The context of the study

The school, which is a public primary school under the Department of Education (DoE), is located in the suburb of Phoenix in the province of Kwa- Zulu Natal.

The school is an English medium, co-educational, primary school. It has a population of 1900 learners from “grade R to grade 7 ranging from 5 to 15 year olds” (Department of Education, 2003b). The school which is in a predominantly Indian suburb borders a peri-urban and rural area settled with isiZulu-speaking families, enrolls learners from Amouti, Zwelisha, Brooksfarm and Bambayi which are informal settlements. The selected school operates in a social context that is complex and undergoing rapid change. Information obtained through school statistics revealed that learners come from an average to very low socio-economic backgrounds, and many come from child headed homes or single parent homes. The teacher/learner ratios range from between 1:45 in grades 1, 2, and 3 and 1:47 in grades 4, 5, 6 and 7. There are about 80 professional and assistant teaching, secretarial ground members of staff. The majority of the teaching staff are financed by the state. A small grant is received into school funds from the state.

The School Governing Body lends assistance to the school and learners. Non-Government Organisations (Indelela, Pick ‘n Pay, Woolworths, Spar, school nutrition programme,

Phoenix Poverty Reduction Association and Bata Toughees and school initiatives (gardening project) finances some of the school's functioning and some educators.

The original buildings consist of classrooms that are constructed from brick, and the extra classes that have been included into the plant, are wooden buildings and are smaller than the normal classroom.

Figure 2 : Picture of school used in the study – original classrooms



Figure 3: Picture of school used in the study – Original building

Figure 4: picture used in the study – additional classrooms



Documentary evidence of the school plant indicates that all the rooms on the plant, even the computer and library are utilized as classrooms, there are no specialist rooms. There is a fenced playing field, used for sport (Soccer and Athletics), and the assembly area is used to play Netball, Volleyball, Mini-cricket and mini tennis.

Data obtained from the school magazine and written reports indicates that the school's mission and vision statement, teacher expertise/experience and access to resources provide for the work ethos and culture of this school. Academically, the school follows the current South African National Curriculum policies that have been adapted to the context of the school. The NCS, FFL, CAPS and the National Assessment Protocol continue to inform curriculum planning and assessment. Learner support materials are sourced from a wide range of publishers and prescribed departmental books are also used in recent years. A basic list of stationery requirements is a prerequisite for the year, unfortunately not all the parents comply with this, because they are financially unable to.

Information obtained from the school yearbook indicates that the school offers learners the opportunity to participate in several external programmes, learners participate in Conquesta Olympiads, Inter-school debates, Spelling Quiz and Reading festivals are out of school experiences. Educators at this school have been National winners at the Teacher Excellence Awards.

Data obtained from the school's personal file indicates that the school's discipline policy is emphasized. Negative behavior is curbed through expulsions, suspensions and parent interviews. As a means to addressing better results, the school management decided to embark on specialized teaching in Grade 3 with the intention of making learners adjust to this type of teaching a year earlier, so that in Grade 4 they will be familiar with specialized teaching. The management thought that if learners are exposed to more educators, other than their form educator teaching them in grade 3, they will be more settled in grade 4. They found that in grade 4, learners take too long to adjust to their educators and scope of work. They cannot cope with the workload and are very immature. It is within this culture that the case is located.

The choice for researching this school was firstly based on this school's unique use of specialized teaching in grade 3 and secondly, convenience and proximity for the researcher provided for relevant accessibility.

This study explored the experiences of Foundation Phase educators within a context of curriculum change in Literacy (English, home language). I have opted for the use of a qualitative study using an interpretivist paradigm. In this chapter I discussed the choice of the paradigm and the reasons for using a case study. Using a purposive sampling I approached educators to participate in semi structured interviews. In this chapter other methods of data gathering, viz. observation of lessons and documentary analysis are discussed and the issues of trustworthiness and ethics are also discussed.

3.3 Qualitative Approach

In a qualitative approach there are multiple realities and the social perspective is understood from the participants' perspective. It also focuses on "phenomena that occur in natural settings and involves studying those phenomena in all their complexity" (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010, p.135). This study lent itself to a qualitative approach because the key distinguishing features of qualitative research permits one to recognize topics from the perspectives of the study participants and "understand the meanings, and interpretations that they give to behavior, events or objects" (Hennik; Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.9). Qualitative data are derived from numerous sources, for example: interviews, observations, field notes, documents and reports, memos, emails and online conversations, diaries, audio and video film materials, website data, advertisements and print materials, pictures and photographs and artefacts.

Since this study was about understanding and interpreting teachers' experiences of curriculum change, a qualitative research design was most apt to enable the interaction between researcher and participants. The data was gathered from participants and occurred in their natural setting and environment, a suburban school in Phoenix.

According to Mouton (2001), in qualitative research, the investigator works typically with valuable expressive data, gathered from methods like observation, interviews and document analysis. The research strategy is usually of a background environment. This suggests an emphasis on the individual case in its exact framework of connotations and meanings. Hence in this study, classroom practice and teacher experiences of curriculum change in the Foundation phase through specialized teaching was described through a qualitative style.

Qualitative research may also reveal "how people experience, understand, interpret and participate in their social and cultural worlds" (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, p.68). Using a qualitative style to explore how curriculum change in literacy (English) for Foundation Phase through specialized teaching is used, understood and experienced may reveal its shortcomings and contradictions. Qualitative studies usually aim for depth of understanding; hence it is my intention to understand how the participants make meaning of curriculum change and apply it to their own teaching which occurs within their natural surroundings. In a qualitative study the "variables are usually not controlled because it is exactly this freedom and natural development of action and representation that we wish to capture. We want to understand and also explain in argument, by using evidence from the data and from the literature, what the phenomenon is about" (Henning, 2004, p. 3). Qualitative research focuses on a particular case, it is used to explore, describe or explain events. Therefore the choice of using a qualitative approach was very relevant in this study. Hence this study was also a way to understand educator experiences as being specialist educators in trying to deliver the curriculum effectively. It was also an attempt to understand educators and their experiences of curriculum change in English within a Foundation phase context.

Qualitative data analysis encompasses consolidating, accounting for and elucidating the data. It also encompasses understanding the data, according to the participants' explanations of the situation, observing "patterns, themes, categories and regularities" (Cohen et al, 2011). A key feature of qualitative research is that study which "often begins early on in data collection process so that theory generation can be undertaken" (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, p. 238).

3.4 The Interpretative Paradigm

This study was located within the interpretative paradigm which was explained in the next section.

When using the interpretative paradigm the researcher gets personally involved, thus making it very subjective. There is “great endeavors to get inside the person and to understand the person from within” (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 17). An interpretative design enables a “researcher to gain new insights about a particular phenomenon, develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon and discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon” (Cohen et al, 2011, p.136). Bassey (1999) highlights that interpretative researchers focus on the explanations of human actions which are centered on social meanings and people co-existing. It interprets the meanings of each other and these meanings alter through social interactions with one another.

According to Cohen et al, (2011, p.17) the following interpretative approaches possess very specific unique features:

- People possess meditative and original actions, intentional acts and meaningful activities.
- Their social world is actively constructed.
- Situations evolve constantly.
- Actions and individuals are distinctive and non-generalizable.
- The researcher remains aloof from the research world.
- Loyalty to the phenomena being considered is essential.
- Team work of events, settings and circumstances.
- There are numerous understandings and viewpoints on, solo events and situations.
- Reality is multifaceted and difficult.
- ‘Thick descriptions’ of events.
- The participant examines situations.

Choosing an interpretative paradigm was very pertinent to this study since it sought to understand the experiences of professionally qualified educators within the social context of a primary school. In understanding the teacher’s experiences of teaching as specialist educators, this study related to educators’ experiences within the context of this school.

Understanding educators shared meanings, perceptions and interpretations around teaching through the specialized teaching approach was vital in this study.

Interpretativist paradigms study “individuals who possess many characteristics, different human behaviors, opinions, and attitudes” (Cohen et al, 2011).

According to Taylor (2008), the interpretive paradigm aids the researcher to obtain knowledge by examining the world and human phenomena in various ways. Therefore, its benefit is in discovering a significant inspection of objects. It affords one chances to obtain understanding of others’ viewpoints which are moulded by the philosophy of social constructions. According to Bryman (2001), through this paradigm, we can obtain a deeper understanding of denotations, explanations, and understand human action research. Therefore, subjectivity is an essential facet of such research. By using the interpretive paradigm, a researcher can perceive a situation with diverse approaches to resolving problems. Several potential solutions and interpretations also originate. The purpose of epistemology in an interpretive paradigm is to gain knowledge by exploring the phenomena from different angles, as the social context is unlike natural science. The interpretive paradigm highlights that the world in social phenomena has varied meanings. According to Fullan (1999), only one factor influences the transformation in social context. Further, various researchers can reach diverse conclusions for the similar observation.

In arguing for an interpretivist paradigm for this study, the value behind Fullan’s comment (1999) that curriculum implementation/classroom practice is a vibrant, multifaceted social process. For any amount of achievement, there has to be adequate capacity. This will transform necessitating individual motivation and beliefs crucial to native contexts. Steady internal constitutional circumstances, may be confirmed during this process. Thus, in trying to understand the experiences of specialist educators at this school, this is achieved in this study within the interpretive paradigm.

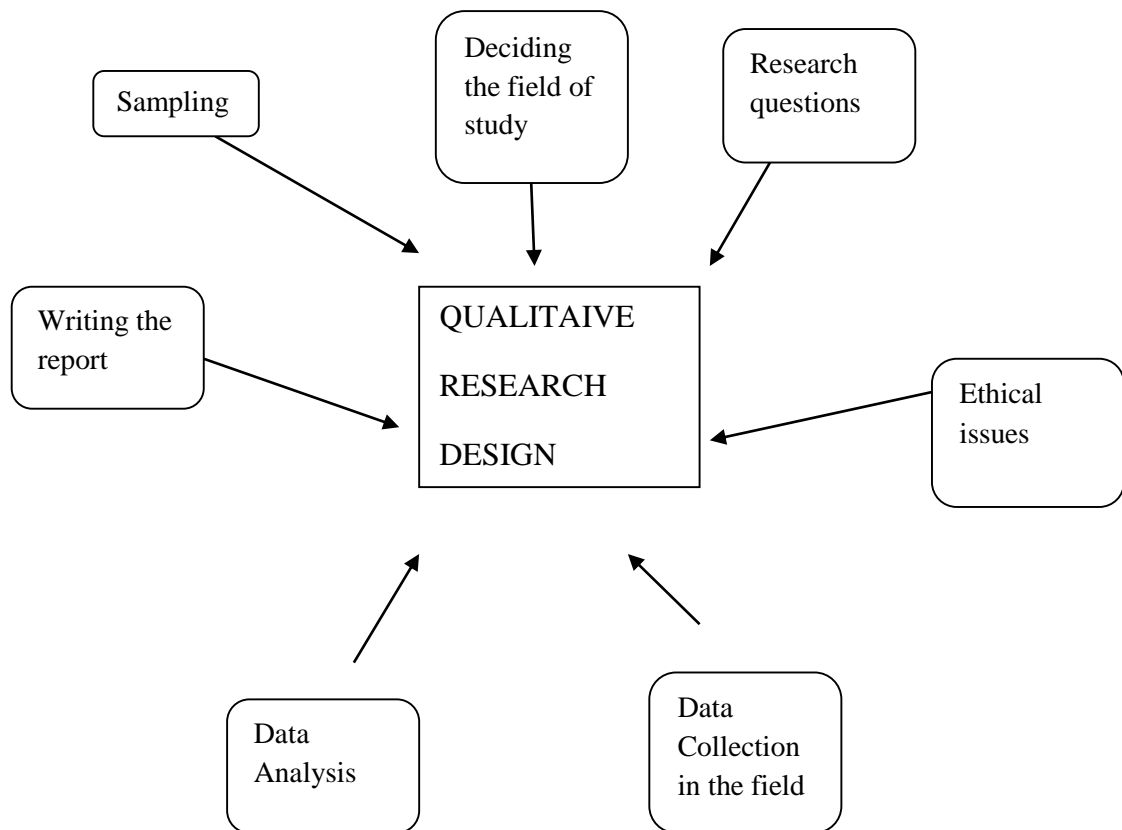
3.5 Research Design and Methods

In the most basic sense, the design is the rational order that links the empirical statistics to a study’s original research questions and eventually to its conclusions. A research design “*is a logical plan for getting from here to there*, where “*here*” may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and “*there*” is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions” (Yin, 2009). An additional discerning style of thinking about a research design is

as a “blueprint” for one’s research, concerning a minimum of four problems: “what question to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect and how to analyze the results” (Phillibe, Schwab and Samsloss, 1980, p.29).

In this chapter I outlined my research design by presenting the key research problems that were answered during this study. An in-depth discussion on the adopted paradigm, style and approach to the research was outlined. An introduction to the unit of analysis, educators teaching the relevant classes, and a selection of the sample is described in detail. In the following diagram the elements of a Research Design are presented. Not all of the stages may apply because the research is done on a smaller scale. To do this a visual matrix of the critical questions and methodology employed was provided (see table 5).

Figure 5: Qualitative Research Design –Adapted from Cohen et al 2011, p.224



Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 2) suggest that research enquiries are devised in response to situations observed. “The field”, as Arsenault and Anderson (1998, p.125) declare “is used generically in qualitative research and simply refers to where the phenomenon exists”. In certain qualitative studies, the field of study will be clued-up by the research purpose, the demand for the research, the problem to be addressed and the questions and sub-questions.

However, in additional qualitative studies the above elements may only arise once the researcher has been involved in the site for a while.

The research questions are integral and are the driving feature of qualitative research. They must be able to be answered concretely, specifically and with the relevant evidence, be achievable and finite and are often characterized by closed questions (Maxwell, 2005 pp. 65-78). In qualitative research, the questions are more probing and process-driven. There are many ethical issues that needed to be addressed.

Informed consensus (to take part and for release) had to be obtained. Confidentiality of the participants had to be maintained. For my study the ethical requirements were met as elaborated further in 3.11 below. The researcher had to decide the selection of people, settings, subjects, time structures, objects and data sources. Sampling also refers to events, places, times, behaviors, activities, settings and processes (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 36).

Given my immersion in the field, working with colleagues who presented various issues about the implementation of the curriculum changes, and my observation of the phenomena, I was able to determine that a purposive sampling of Foundation phase educators would be an appropriate sample. My presence in the field also facilitated my study as I was able to conduct the research *in situ* and plan my studies within certain timeframes.

The researcher had to gain entry and consent, ascertain a reason for the research, acquire a role and an individual, and identify the 'gatekeepers' who assist with entry and admittance to the group being researched (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, pp. 100-111). I obtained permission from the relevant authorities as described in subsection (see section 3.11). The problem of managing relations was critical for the researcher. The researcher retained neutrality. The researcher made contact with the informants and secured their cooperation.

Finding informants is important. They have the necessary knowledge, information and experience of the issue being investigated. The participants were educated about the research and were given a letter outlining the research and consent for their involvement, which was signed by participants; pseudonyms were used, the participants' names were not used in the study and the interview was clearly outlined to them. The researcher explained that in order to obtain data for the research, an interview was conducted at their convenience which was recorded. Also a lesson

observation was conducted in all their classes. These were in response to critical questions 1 and 2.

Developing and maintaining relations in the field is very important. The researcher has to build the participant's confidence in him/herself, develop a rapport and be discreet. Rapport and relationships affect the data collection, sampling and research design (Maxwell, 2005, p. 83). In qualitative research there are numerous kinds of data collection tools. The researcher can utilize "field notes, participant observation, journal notes, interviews, diaries, life histories, artefacts, documents, video recordings or audio recordings" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.199). In qualitative research the instrument used frequently is the semi-structured interview. When one is writing the report, as far as possible the writing should be very factual and the moral agreements of report writing must be honored. In terms of this study, which was a case study, leaving the field was not an issue at all, because the researcher was very much part of the field.

3.6 Case Study

A case study offers an exclusive example of actual people in actual circumstances, permitting readers to comprehend ideas more evidently, "case studies can establish cause and effect ('how' and 'why'); indeed one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects, and that in-depth understanding is required to do justice to the case" (Cohen et al, 2011, p.289).

According to Cohen et al, (2011, p.124-5), , the researcher "observes the characteristics of an individual unit – a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community". The purpose is to "probe deeply and to analyse intensively the diverse phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs."

With reference to McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p. 344), "a case study is an in-depth analysis of a single entity. It is unique according to place, time and participant characteristics". MacDonald and Walker (1975), avert that a case study is the investigation of an occurrence in action, while Yin (2003, p.13) suggests that it "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within real-life context". Stake (1995, p. 3) referred to a case study as "research into a particular situation". In my study, the particular reason is to explore the experiences of Foundation phase educators on curriculum change in English. A vital feature of case study

research is that the study is “conducted in its natural context”, (Bassey, 1999, p. 47). This case study was bound by the following parameters:

- Curriculum implementation requirements of the Foundation phase NCS policy of South Africa.
- Context found in a diverse suburban primary school set in the geographical location of Phoenix.
- A time frame between 2011 and 2012.
- The personal and professional experiences of professionally qualified experienced intermediate phase educators who are now teaching Grade 3 learners as specialist English educators.

This study aimed to explain and describe educators’ experiences of implementing the CAPS curriculum through specialist teaching. In addressing curriculum change, this situation has not been artificially generated for the purpose of this study, but already exists. This case was already in its natural phenomena which existed prior to the researcher embarking on this study. The case of understanding the specialist teaching approach will help to communicate its findings to others.

This method allowed the researcher to understand the perceptions or challenges of Grade 3 educators relating to their experiences in presenting the change in curriculum in English in the Foundation phase. Ultimately the study allowed the researcher to have a deep understanding of the educator’s experiences in curriculum delivery in English in Foundation phase.

A case study, according to Cohen et al, (2011, p.290) “has a rich and vivid description of relevant events, provides a chronological narrative of events, blends a description of events with the analysis and highlights specific events and focuses on individuals or groups and seeks to understand their perceptions”. Similarly Yin (2009, p.18) points out that case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context”.

Each educator has his/her own interpretation of the curriculum and employs his/her own methods of teaching. According to (McMillan and Schumacher, 2010, p. 344), “a case study is an in-depth analysis of a single entity. It is unique according to place, time and participant characteristics”. This research was confined to one school and one grade. Grade 3 is a

culmination of grade 1 and 2 and learners are more mature at this level to make sense of the intricacies of English. For the purposes of this study a case study was appropriately suited. Case studies can be used for descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory purposes (Yin, 1993). A case study was used to comprehend a real-life phenomenon profoundly. Curriculum change is when a new curriculum is adopted to implement changes in the teaching and learning process at schools.

A case study was chosen for this study because the researcher wanted to investigate the experiences of Foundation phase educators regarding curriculum implementation. This research was conducted in a real life situation and a case study seemed most appropriate.

When case studies are conducted, the data collection is varied and extensive. Case studies also use multiple methods to collect data. These data often include observations, interviews, documents and audio-visual materials. Hence in this research, to enhance validity of the research, observations and semi-interviews were used to generate data.

3.7. Research Tools used in the study

Research questions includes the” engine that steers the train of enquiry. It sets the direct agenda for research, permits data to be accumulated and allows analysis to begin also establishes the boundaries of timeframes within which it will operate” (Bassey, 1998, p. 67). The research purpose in this study was to strive to focus the issue through asking pertinent research questions.

The purpose of Critical question 1, *what are the changes that have been effected in Literacy (English) in the Foundation phase*, was to elicit teacher’s own perceptions and understanding of the curriculum. When presenting a curriculum to learners many educators experience challenges or difficulties. Sometimes they do not fully understand the curriculum due to not being trained in that curriculum or there is not enough support given to them. By using the qualitative approach and one of the instruments, namely interviews, the researcher expects to gain a better understanding of the educator’s interaction with the curriculum. The purpose of critical question 2, *How do Foundation phase educators experience these changes*, is to understand the experiences of teachers’ working with the curriculum. Here again, interviews was used as well as lesson observations.

In the following table the matrix with my critical questions and methodology is described.

Table 7: Research Design

| Critical Questions | Purpose | Respondents/ Participants | Methods | Research Enquiry |
|---|---|------------------------------|--|--|
| <p>Critical Question 1</p> <p>What are the changes that have been effected in Literacy (English) in Foundation phase</p> | <p>To elicit teacher’s own perceptions and understanding of the curriculum change</p> | <p>Grade 3 educators</p> | <p>Methods for critical question 1</p> <p>Interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retraining • Challenges • Qualifications | <p>Qualitative approach Cohen et al, (2011)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretivist research • Research Design • Case study • Sampling • Interviews • Observations <p>Mcmillan, Schumacher, (2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study <p>Leedy and Ormond (2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative approach <p>Yin (2009)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Design • Case study • Trustworthiness <p>Kvale (1996)</p> <p>Interviews</p> |

| Critical Questions | Purpose | Respondents/ Participants | Methods | Research Enquiry |
|---|--|------------------------------|--|------------------|
| <p>Critical question 2</p> <p>How do Foundation phase educators experience these changes?</p> | <p>To understand teacher's experiences of working with the Curriculum.</p> | <p>Educators</p> | <p>Methods for Critical question 2</p> <p>Interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges • Support <p>Classroom Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonics – Are pupils able to Blend sounds – segment words into 2/3 sounds • Construct an oral sentence to show understanding of word/s <p>2. Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify concepts being taught and use correctly in sentence /paragraph construction <p>3. Sentence construction / Paragraph Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct simple or complex sentences. <p>Use Phonics understanding and Spelling guidelines to write unacquainted words.</p> | |
| <p>Methods for Critical question 2 Continued.....</p> <p>4. Shared Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are pupils able to orally answer questions? • Are they able to make predictions about the story? • Is the learner's listening and comprehension skills, being developed? • Can the learners identify sight words? <p>5. Guided / Group Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can learners read the book on their own • Are they capable to read words and sounds previously taught? | | | | |

During lesson observations, a lesson on Phonics, Language, Sentence construction / Paragraph writing, Shared reading and Guided/Group reading was observed. English is broken down into Phonics, Handwriting, Writing, Reading which includes Shared reading and Group Guided reading and Listening and Speaking. In comparison to the Foundations for Learning document the following suggestions are made:

Table 8: Instructional Time - Department of Education (2011, p.9)

| |
|--|
| Listening & speaking 15 minutes per day for 3 days 45 minutes |
| Reading & Phonics Phonics 15 minutes per day for 4 days (1 hour) |
| Shared Reading 20 minutes per day for 3 days (1 hour) |
| Group Reading 30 minutes per day (2 groups each for 15 minutes) for 5 days (2 hours 30 minutes) 4 hours 30 minutes |
| Handwriting 15 minutes per day for 3 days 45 minutes |
| Writing 20 minutes per day for 3 days 1 hour |

According to Cohen et al (2011), Qualitative data analysis encompasses arranging, accounting for and elucidating the data, constructing logic of the data, in relation to the participants' meanings of the situation, "observing patterns, themes, categories and regularities". A key item of qualitative research is that "analysis often begins early on in data collection process so that theory generation can be undertaken". (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, p. 238). LeCompte and Preissle (1993, pp. 237-53) advise that "researchers should set out the main outlines of the phenomena under investigation. They should assemble the groups of data, write summaries of what is found".

The transcripts were read and re-read in order to establish themes and patterns because I had used the same interview questions for all educators. The participants' answers were grouped together to give me an idea of each theme. The data were manually cut and pasted (Hammersly and Atkinson, 1983) in order to construct a conceptual theme that allowed me to interrogate the data. The educators' responses to the same questions were grouped together under a theme.

In Phonics the ability of learners' to blend sounds and construct oral sentences to show their understanding of these words will be observed. The educator teaches learners the skills to blend words, they would use these skills to form words which they could use in their sentence

construction and also identify when reading. During Language the ability of learners to correctly identify concepts and use these in their sentences was observed. These concepts are used correctly when learners write sentences and also when they communicate. Learners may understand a concept orally but may not apply this correctly when speaking or writing. Sentence construction deals with constructing simple to complex sentences thus increasing their writing speed. Sometimes learners write according to the manner in which speak. When constructing sentences learners are made aware of using the correct Punctuation in sentences.

During Shared reading, the learners read together with the educator. They learn enunciation of words, expression of words, tone and speed of reading. Difficult words and phrases are explained. Learners' develop their listening skills. When the educator asks questions, they have to remember the discussions on the extract and answer accordingly. They also should be able to draw inferences from what they read. All these concepts are used during Guided / Group reading. Learners put into practice the concepts and skills that they learnt during Phonics, Language and Shared reading. Learners read on their own, the educator corrects their pronunciation of words, monitors their speed, tone and expression. During lesson observations, the researcher will be observing these concepts.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

Methodology is concerned with precise ways, or approaches that we can utilize to attempt and better comprehend our world. It may be regarded as the epistemological home of inquiry informing its philosophy, reasoning and argument behind its value and processes (Henning 2004, p.36) and method is the end product. The connection between methods and methodology is intricate. Method is the action of doing a single thing. Methodology denotes a cluster of methods that deliver the data and its findings that reflects the research question and suits the purpose. This point is highlighted in the following quote - "together methods should be able to provide a thick description" of the theme of study but they should also be able to render a "thick description" of the methodology itself" (Geertz 1973, pp. 6-7, 9-10).

The following section provides a description and argues for the suitability of the data gathering approaches used in this research. The section begins with a description of the site and the two instruments used to collect the data, interviews and observations.

3.8.1 Data gathering

The two methods used in gathering the data, interviews and lesson observations are explained. Each method is discussed through a presentation of the reason and value of its choice, its advantages and disadvantages, a plan of the data collection analysis techniques, limitations, trustworthiness and ethics.

3.8.1.1 Interviews

An interview, as Kvale (1996, p. 11) points out, is an exchange between two or more persons on an issue of common significance, understands the importance of human relations for information production and highlights the public situated-ness of research information. Laing (1967, cited in Cohen et al, 2011, p. 409) points out that “the interview is not exclusively either subjective or objective, it is inter-subjective”. Interviews allow participants – either interviewers or interviewees – to “discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view” (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 409).

Accordingly in this study the specialized teaching within curriculum change was highlighted. Dyer (1995, p. 56-58) highlights that “an interview is not an ordinary, everyday conversation”. The interview is specific, in this case the experiences of Foundation phase educators within curriculum change will be considered. The purposes of an interview is varied, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 268-70) highlighted quite a few reasons for interviewing, namely, “present construction of events, feelings, persons, organizations, activities, motivations, concerns, claims, reconstructions of past experiences; projections into the future; verifying, amending and extending data”. Further Silverman (1993, p. 92-93) adds that “interviews in qualitative research are useful for gathering facts, accessing beliefs about facts; identifying feelings and motives; commenting on the standards of actions (what could be done about situations) ; exploring present or previous behavior, eliciting reasons and explanations”. But in this instance it is limited to the use of it being a precise study tool. It is used to reveal participant’s attitudes and behavior (Kvale, 1996, p. 30).

During an interview individuals engage with each other in greater interaction as opposed to completing a questionnaire or being observed. It is specific and also very flexible. It enables the interviewer to probe deeper.

There are different kinds of interviews that are available and include ,“standardized, in-depth, ethnographic, elite, life history, focus groups, semi-structured, structured, exploratory, informal conversational, guide approaches, group and closed quantitative interviews” (Cohen et al, 2011 p.412). There are many purposes for using an interview, such as to evaluate or “assess a person in some respect, select or promote an employee, effect therapeutic change, test or develop hypotheses, gather data and to sample respondents’ opinions” (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 411).

At the most basic level, interviews are conversations (Kvale, 1996, p.1), defines qualitative research interviews as "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations." For this research, the investigator used a semi-structured interview. It was suitable due to the following reasons:

- The interviews were flexible and undeviating. The researcher’s commitment in the interview was to elicit teacher’s own perceptions and understanding of the Curriculum and to understand the experiences of teachers’ working with the Curriculum. This research is qualitative, the interviews ranged from informal to formal and lengthy questions. It was also a face-to-face and interpersonal exchange of information.
- There was flexibility in the semi-structured interviews. This enabled the researcher to gain clarity about unclear responses and allowed for further probing to gain in-depth information.
- Rich data was collected from the semi-structured interviews. It allowed the researcher/interviewer to gain an awareness into the characters and the strength of the participants’ feelings, beliefs and motives and perceived underlying incentives, (Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2002, p. 302).

In qualitative data the researcher typically works with a wealth of opulent expressive information gathered from interviews. According to Kerlinger (1970), even though the research drives oversee the questions that were put forth, their content, order and language are completely in the interviewer’s hands. Kvale (1996, p. 88) highlights the seven phases of interview usage that are followed in this case study: themazing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting.

The formatting of interview questions is important. Questions, according to Spradley (1979); Patton (1980) could be drawn from behavior, feelings, background, demography and experience. In this case study questions are derived from participants' personal, professional and practical experiences. The setting and conducting of the interview was carefully considered. Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 268-2700) emphasize that the preparation to conduct the interview is vital. The physical environment must be carefully considered. Audio recorders, notepad, suitable reserved venue with comfortable seating, spare batteries, dress and manner of approach must also be considered. Interviews are unrestrained events intended at discovering what participants "think, know and feel" (Henning, 2004). According to Krueger and Casey (2000, p. xi), "semi-structured interviews is about listening. It is about paying attention. It is about being open to hear what people are saying. It is about being non-judgmental. It is about creating a comfortable environment for people to share. It is about being careful and systematic about things people tell you". It has various advantages, it is conducted at an appropriate speed, there is direct interaction, it is in-depth and allows for probing. The disadvantages also prevail: they can be very strenuous, expensive, uncertain answers and different interviewers may comprehend and record interviews differently.

According to Merton, Fiske and Kendall, (1990), this kind of interview is also known as a 'focused interview', a person is interviewed for a brief period. In this study, the participants were interviewed for an hour. Interviews were done over a two month period, June to July 2012. The availability of participants were considered. Interviews were conducted in an empty classroom that was quiet and conducive to the interview being conducted. All interviews were recorded.

Interviews were conducted in three stages. The first stage allowed for the purpose and aim of the study to be established, this was done in January 2012. It also focused on the qualifications, educational credibility and experience of the participants. The second interview which was held in October 2012 focused on their understanding of curriculum change and curriculum implementation in the classroom. Questions were asked according to the question schedule. When drawing up the interview questions, I focused on the literature review and the areas that were critiqued by various researchers. Hence the interview schedule covered questions on the curriculum, their understanding of what a curriculum was, the components of English and how learners responded to these components, how learners

responded to English as a secondary language and their use of teaching only in English in grade 3 is probed into. I also consulted with Kvale's list of qualification criteria of an (1996, pp.133-135):

- *Knowledgeable*: is thoroughly familiar with the focus of the interview; pilot interviews of the kind used in survey interviewing can be useful here.
- *Structuring*: gives purpose for interview; rounds it off; asks whether interviewee has questions.
- *Clear*: asks simple, easy, short questions; no jargon.
- *Gentle*: let people finish; gives them time to think; tolerates pauses.
- *Sensitive*: listens attentively to what is said and how it is said; is empathetic in dealing with the interviewee.
- *Open*: responds to what is important to interviewee and is flexible.
- *Steering*: knows what he/she wants to find out.
- *Critical*: is prepared to challenge what is said, for example, dealing with inconsistencies in interviewees' replies.
- *Remembering*: relates what is said to what has previously been said.
- *Interpreting*: clarifies and extends meanings of interviewees' statements, but without imposing meaning on them.

A follow-up interview in September 2012, after classroom observations was conducted. It allowed for verification of certain teaching techniques and teaching styles adopted during lessons. Questions ranged from learner feedback to educator interaction with learners during lessons and the challenges experienced by both educators and learners during lessons. This allowed for the reconstruction of experiences that was essential to answering questions. This also allowed participants to reflect on their interaction with the curriculum.

Through these methods many experiences of the educators unfolded. This information was very essential because it gave the researcher an idea as to whether the Curriculum has any contribution in preparing the learners for tests and examinations. It also revealed the form/s of support provided to educators in their preparation for critical engagement with the curriculum process particularly the teaching process. Ultimately the study will allow the researcher to have a deep understanding of educators' experiences in Curriculum change in literacy (English) in the Foundation phase.

In interviews the data is very rich, it involves a lot of selecting and ordering. As Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to as “coding” and Dey (1993) as “categorizing”

The following seven stage process suggested by Cohen et al (2011) are considered for analyzing the interview data gathered for this case study. However only six of these stages were relevant for this study:

- Stage 1 – Transcriptions – use of a computer to transcribe audio recordings into contextual data.
- Stage 2 – Delineating units of meaning –data was scrutinized and separated into units.
- Stage 3 – Eliminating redundancies and clustering units of relevant meaning – eliminating repetitions and redundancies by careful checking and reading.
- Stage 4 – Determining themes and summarizing – examined clusters themes and summarized.
- Stage 5 – Modifying themes and summarizing – modified and added themes when necessary.
- Stage 6 – Contextualizing of themes and summarizing –findings and recommendations.

The above stages were used during analyzing the interview data.

Kvale points out (1996, pp. 111-120), “interviews have ethical dimensions; they concern interpersonal interactions and produce information about the human condition. One can identify three ethical issues here – informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of the interviews”. Cohen, et.al (2011) argue that there are three key areas of ethical issues, namely, “Informed consent, Confidentiality and Consequence of the research”. In order to observe ethical matters and to achieve the trust and backing of respondents, the researcher applied all of the above mentioned ethical issues that is informed consent, confidentiality and consequences of the interview, which was discussed in greater detail under subsection 3.11.

3.8.1.2 Observations

According to Marshall and Rossman, (1995); Simpson and Tuscon, (2003, p.2) observation is a “research method that enables researchers to systematically observe and record people’s

behavior, actions and interactions”. The process also allows researchers “to obtain a detailed description of social settings or events in order to situate people’s behavior within their own socio-cultural context”, (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p. 170). Therefore “observational methods used in social science involve the systematic, detailed observation of behavior and talk: watching and recording what people do and say”, (Mays and Pope, 1995, p. 182). Observation is also “used to understand and interpret cultural behavior” (Mulhall, 2003, p. 306). In this instance it was used to determine educator’s experiences with the curriculum. Observations (Morrison, 1993, p. 80), “enable the researcher to gather data on the physical, human, and interactional and programme setting”.

According to Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011), when observations are being conducted, multiple tasks are being performed. The observer watches, listens, questions and records people’s actions, expressions and connections, as well as observing the social location, site and the environment in which people are being observed. By means of observation, researchers are able to attain a “*thick description*” of the social location, the actions and people that are being considered. The phrase “thick description” stems from Geertz (1973), who emphasized the need to situate people’s behaviors and actions within local backgrounds in order to comprehend culture by examining interpretations and looking for meaning. Observations allow the researcher to provide complementary data to understand issues from different perspectives.

In qualitative research, observations are unstructured and flow freely and very flexible. There are two kinds of observation, namely, participant and non-participant observation. Participant observation can be described as “the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day –to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting” (Schensul and Le Compte, 1999, p. 91). In participant observation, the researcher is part of the observation, sometimes acting incognito.

Spradley (1980) identifies four levels of participation within the method of participant observation.

- Passive participation – merely observe and record
- Moderate participation – acting as an outsider and insider
- Active participation – actively involved with participants.
- Complete participation – living in the study area

In this study the researcher was a passive participant. The researcher observed the lessons that were taught. The initial responses of the learners to the educator were observed, that is, how the learners responded to the educator when he / she entered the classroom. The learners' attitude towards the lesson and their response towards the lesson were also observed. The educator's teaching style that was used during the lesson and the way that the lessons were presented. Data was gathered from the start of the lesson until it ended. The researcher did not make any inputs when the lesson was taught, all data was recorded in the observation schedule and transcripts.

In non-participant observation, the researcher is not directly involved in the research. The process involves observing people, activities or events from a distance. Sometimes this is difficult, a researcher may influence the situation by their presence or actions. This is referred to as the "Hawthorne effect" (Mulhall, 2003). Observations are the systemic manner of looking at events, people, behaviors, settings, artefacts and routines (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Simpson and Tuson, 2003, p. 2). Observations offer the researcher "the chance to collect animate data from naturally social circumstances. The researcher works *in situ*" (Cohen, et al 2011, p.456). Observations focus on facts, events and behaviors. It allows the researcher to collect data on the physical, human, interactional and programme settings.

In scheduling an observation one has to ponder: how, when, where and what to observe; interval, timing, context and nature of the observation and the need for the observation; the merging of subjective and objective observation; the worth of secret participant observation in order to decrease creativity, intimidations to dependability and rationality; the need to operationalize the observation and to choose the suitable organized observation and recording; working secretly, or whether informed consent is necessary; justification of deception.

Bailey (1994, p. 243-4) identifies some advantages of observations.

- Observations greater to experiments and surveys when collecting data.
- Investigators discern ongoing behavior and make suitable notes.
- Informal relationships are established with people that are being observed.
- Observations are less responsive than other data gathering methods.

The observation enabled a lot of data to be collected. During the observation, notes were made and this added strength to the data. A relationship was formed with the educators being observed, no difficulties were encountered.

Observations enables one to understand what people do or do not do, listening to what they say and how they say it and observing how people interact with observations the researcher can actually see what people are doing, it also allows one to learn about their behavior and how these what people say and what they really do.

Body language also reveals further information about behavioral norms. Observing people's gestures and body language provides rich data on a situation. In this instance, the way the learners sat during lessons, their gestures, eye contact revealed their response to the lesson and the educator. Some leaned forward or nodded in agreement with the educator while he/she was talking, while others looked away or yawned.

The social setting also impacts on observations. For example in this research, the seating plan impacted on teaching and learning. Was there enough place for everyone? The seating arrangements of learners during Reading influenced their access to the educator's voice and questions. It also allows one to situate the activities that that are taking place in the location. For example, the charts that are displayed are important to the learning process, they serve as a reference for the learners. In line with the aforementioned discussions the researcher used non participant observation in this study.

The research methods that the researcher used were observations and semi-structured interviews. The individual unit was observed - the class - the purpose of which was to explore profoundly and to examine intensively the diverse phenomena regarding the curriculum. The observation consisted of two parts, one was the observation of the actual lesson being done by the educator and secondly, pupils responses to the lesson.

The observations took place between June/August of the school year 2012. An observational schedule (Appendix D) was drawn up and during observations notes were made. Notes were made regarding the classroom atmosphere, teaching goals, materials used and how motivated the learners were. During the second interview, notes that were made under discussion points were addressed with the educator. In a few observations, the educator had used resources that needed clarification, these were addressed in the second interview.

After the one-to-one interviews the researcher had to develop transcripts of the participants. Each participant spoke for approximately one hour. After the interview, the written notes and audio transcriptions were analyzed. The notes that were written down during the interview and observations were also analyzed.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993, pp. 237-53) advise “that researchers should set out the main outlines of the phenomena under investigation. They should assemble the groups of data, write summaries of what is found”. The transcripts were read and re-read in order to establish themes and patterns because the same interview questions for all educators. The participants answers were grouped together to give an idea of each theme. The data were manually cut and pasted (Hammersly and Atkinson, 1983), in order to construct a conceptual theme that allowed me to interrogate the data. The educators’ responses to the same questions were grouped together under a theme.

The matrix with the observation schedule is described.

Table 9: Research enquiry: Observation Schedule

| EDUCATOR | PHONICS | LANGUAGE | SENTENCE/PARAGRAPH WRITING | SHARED READING | GUIDED READING |
|----------|---|--|--|---|---|
| X, Y, Z | <p>During lessons, learners' ability to blend sounds and construct words were noted. Their ability to construct an oral sentence and how well they understood the words were also observed.</p> <p>Workbook</p> | <p>How appropriately learners used the skills and knowledge that they gained during lessons into their written work.</p> <p>Workbook; Comprehensive English Practice</p> | <p>How well learners incorporated the skills taught into their written work.</p> | <p>How involved were learners in the Reading lessons, and if they are capable of answering questions on the text.</p> <p>Workbook</p> | <p>Do learners read with the correct expression, tone and pronunciation? Were learners able to read on their own and recognize sight words? How did they respond to the educator's questions regarding the text?</p> <p>Happy Holidays Giant Treasury</p> |

The above table indicates the lesson that was observed. Each lesson was 30 minutes long. This observation was done over a two week period. Only 1 lesson per day was observed in that class. Both educators were observed for the same lesson on the same day. This allowed for the reconstruction, consolidation and exploration of educator's experiences of curriculum change in English in Foundation phase. This also allowed educators to reflect on their teaching and were touched upon during the second interview session. Each of the above components, form an integral part of Literacy.

In Phonics, the ability of learners' to blend sounds and construct oral sentences to show their understanding of these words will be observed. The educator teaches learners the blends, they would use these skills to form words which they could use in their sentence construction and also identify when reading. Learners need to distinguish between the different phonemes that make up words. They need to 'sound out' the letters in words. Phonics is interrelated with the other components. Words need to be recognized in order to be read, written or spelt ('sounded out').

In Language concepts are taught to learners which assist them in Reading and Writing. Reading is very important, learners need to also understand what they read. During Language the ability of learners to correctly identify concepts and use these in their sentences will be observed. These concepts are used correctly when learners write sentences and also when they communicate. Learners may understand a concept orally but may not apply this correctly when speaking or writing.

Sentence construction deals with constructing simple to complex sentences thus increasing their writing speed. Sometimes learners write according to the manner in which speak. When constructing sentences learners are made aware of using the correct Punctuation in sentences.

During Shared reading, the learners read together with the educator. They learn enunciation of words, expression of words, tone and speed of reading. Difficult words and phrases are explained. Learners' develop their listening skills. When the educator asks questions, they have to remember the discussions on the extract and answer accordingly. They also should be able to draw inferences from what they read. All these concepts are used during Guided / Group reading. Reading is very important, learners need to also understand what they read. Thus Shared Reading is a discussion, interpretation and critical understanding of the selected texts. Learners put into practice the concepts and skills that they learnt during Phonics, Language and Shared reading. Learners read on their own, the educator corrects their

pronunciation of words, monitors their speed, tone and expression. During lesson observations, the researcher will be observing these concepts.

For the shared reading exercises the educator used the Workbooks. During reading the educators used the Giant Treasury series, Happy Holiday and the Workbook. The workbook had very simple extracts. The Readers were also very simple. They were suitable for ages three to five year old children. The Happy Holiday book was also very simple and not appropriate for grade 3.

3.8.1.3 Document Reviews

Documents (memos, letters, position papers, newspaper clippings, minutes of meetings, curriculum guides, lesson plans, educational journals and written reports) surrounding a school curriculum can provide background information and understanding of issues (Hopkins, 2009, p. 122). Thus further to conducting interviews and observations and to ensure triangulation and trustworthiness is maintained, documents are reviewed in this study. The advantages of documents is that “it illuminates issues surrounding a curriculum or teaching, provides context, background and understanding and also provides an easy way of obtaining other people’s perceptions” (Hopkins, 2009, p. 123). These documents are part of the educator’s classroom practice and interaction with learners. It helps to capture data from the documents that assist the researcher to reconstruct events, it also helps to emphasize certain views that were expressed during an interview or an observation, thus enhancing why certain responses match or do not match. If documents are omitted from a study there will be gaps left unfilled (van Rensburg and Smith, 2004).

In this case study (lesson plan, curriculum guides, newspaper clippings, educational journals and written reports) were consulted that provided authenticity and helps to provide more information in trying to understand and address the topic exactly.

- **Policy documents**

Curriculum policy documents as in the National Curriculum Statement-Foundation phase- are used against the classroom practice of educators. These documents consisted of the CAPS document and the Assessment documents for the National Curriculum Statement which were implemented in 2012. The CAPS document was developed by a writing team in 2010. They used the NCS to fill in gaps, reduce repetition and clarify the content. The current curriculum’s outcomes and assessment standards were revised into common objectives of the

curriculum. The content and skills that must be taught by the educator and learnt by the learner is graded according to the specific grade and term. The CAPS document has topics and assessments for each subject and has its own time frame. The documents clearly outline what each educator should do in their class. This enables the researcher to establish how policy shapes and defines the curriculum implementation and classroom delivery through specialized teaching in grade 3, especially in English.

- **Teaching documents**

These teaching documents included educator files, lesson preps and learners' books in order to recognize instructional requirements and trials and explain an instructional task. These were also used to analyse and to capture the approach to curriculum implementation. As a guide, none of the documents are used as arbitrary. Careful examination was undertaken to determine construction, lay out, standard and routine formulations used in specific forms (Henning, 2004).

3.9 Sampling

Sampling is the procedure by which implication is indicated to the whole by investigating a portion. According to Crossman (2010), a sample is a subsection of the people being considered.

This study used a purposive sampling design. During purposive sampling, “researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality, or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. In this way researchers build up a sample that is satisfactory to their needs” (Cohen et al, 2011, p.158). Furthermore, the key in purposive sampling is the decision of the researcher in selecting members that would be best liable to provide applicable data, together in terms of significance and profundity. According to Oliver (2006), it is particularly appreciated that the selection of the sample is centered on an assortment of standards which may incorporate professional understanding of the study matter. Patton (1990, p.169), states that “all types of sampling in qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully”. Morse (1991, p.129) states that “when obtaining a purposeful sample, the researcher selects a participant according to the needs of the study”. It is also necessary that sampling can change during a study (Creswell, 2007).

In addressing the purposes of this qualitative case study, four carefully selected Grade 3 educators for fitting the ‘criteria of desirable participants’ (Henning, 2010) are selected.

The educators participated on a voluntary basis for this study. At this site, one sample was not trained to teach English. The principal had declared the educator an English specialist educator although the educator was trained to teach Mathematics. The second participant was a senior primary educator and had not previously taught in the Foundation phase. Third and fourth participant are Foundation Phase educators at the school. The educators participated on a voluntary basis for this study

These professionally qualified educators in my judgment were best suited for the purpose of the study to offer an informed understanding of the research problem through a specialized teaching approach. The educators that participated in this study, did so on a voluntary basis. Purposive sampling was used to gain access to “knowledgeable people that is, those who have in depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise or experience(Ball, 1990)” (as cited in Cohen et al, 2011 p. 157). Therefore, the chosen sample was appropriate for this research in terms of their knowledge regarding Curriculum and policy interaction. The rationale for choosing this sample is pertinent for the following reasons:

- **Qualification, Training and Teaching experience:** Educators are professionally qualified and trained primary school educators who have a few years of experience in this school; they also have several years of classroom experience and teach in an integrated, diverse classroom environment in the new South African classroom
- **Curriculum experience:** Educators have had experience in teaching several different curriculums during their teaching experience and have confronted changes in the curriculum; they are specialized educators teaching only English. Educators are trained in-service by the Department of Education to teach CAPS curriculum and they implement CAPS in the Foundation phase.
- **Institutional Expectations:** Educators have keen institutional understanding of the daily operation of the school, which includes, departmental and school demands, administering and fostering school discipline and dealing with learners with barriers to learning; they engage in mandatory daily and weekly planning of lessons and are

expected to teach co and extra -curricular programmes after school and when the need arises, over week-ends.

- **Institutional Support:** Educators are exposed to Professional Development programmes.

Within purposive sampling, convenience sampling was also employed. It was selected because it is fast, inexpensive, easy and the subjects were readily available. Cognizance is given to the fact that convenience sampling is biased from a lot of prejudices around credibility and representivity, its small cost and easiness makes it a desired choice. One of the controls in place to make the sample a little fairer, was the inclusion of using educators of each sex, who teach in grade 3.

Table 10: Biographical details of Educators

| EDUCATOR | EXPERIENCE |
|----------|---|
| Jabu | BA + HDE degree in education. Senior Primary qualified educator. 10 years teaching experience, 1 year in Foundation phase. |
| Mary | B. Social Science, BA + HDE Senior primary qualified educator. 20 years of service, 10 years teaching in Foundation Phase |
| Rani | Bachelor of Education degree (majoring in Mathematics). Senior primary Mathematics educator. 2 years teaching experience, 1 year in Foundation phase. |
| Kalay | B.Ed. (Hons.) in education. Junior Primary qualified educator. 19 years teaching experience, 17 years teaching in Foundation Phase |

The data gathered for this study was gathered from the above participants. Two educators were very inexperienced in teaching in the Foundation Phase. They were not qualified to teach in this phase. The educators' teaching experiences of teaching in grade 3 were extracted through interviews and lesson observations.

3.10 Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggests four standards which should be deliberated: trustworthiness, transferability, reliability and conformability. Internal validity, is maintained by seeking to ensure that the study measures or tests what is really envisioned. The interview

questions were discussed with my supervisor and feedback was received pertaining to the questions. Questions had to be edited. Certain questions were deleted and amended. Lincoln and Guba contend that guaranteeing trustworthiness is the single most essential issues in forming credibility. Yin (2009) recognizes the importance of incorporating “correct operational measures for the concepts being studied”. Triangulation may include using diverse approaches, particularly observation, focus groups and individual interviews, which form the main data collection approaches for many qualitative research. In this research, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and classroom observations were used.

Denzin (1978) refers to triangulation as using multiple methods of data collection in a single study. It is assumed that since these methods complement each other their shortcomings are balanced out. In this research the following methods were used to ensure trustworthiness in the research: detailed description of the interview and observation was a significant provision for encouraging credibility as it assisted to express the real circumstances that had been explored.

According to Cannel and Kahn (1986), in interviews, implications surrounding legitimacy are constructed too frequently on the basis of surface legitimacy. A single cause of invalidity prejudice defined as “a systematic or persistent tendency to make errors in the same direction”, that is, to exaggerate or minimize the “true value” of an element (Lansing, Ginsburg and Braaten 1961). In this research, greater validity was ensured by reducing the amount of bias. An organized interview, with the similar questions and format was used for all the participants. The observation schedule was also the same.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Department of Education and University of Kwa-Zulu Natal – Edgewood, prior to commencement of data collection (see Appendix A). Permission was also sought from the Department of Education. A letter seeking permission to conduct the research in school was handed to the principal. He read the contents of the letter and granted permission to conduct the research. Educators were given letters explaining the research process and requesting their participation in the research process. Educators read these and agreed to be part of the research process.

Educators understood their participation was voluntary. They were free to withdraw at any time from the study and were entitled to view the material. Details of which material will be

public knowledge and which will be confidential were also discussed. Participants were given the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity and the usage of pseudonyms. Hence in the attached Appendices names of the school and the educators have been deleted to protect their identity and to ensure confidentiality. Permission regarding recording of interviews and conducting observations were also obtained. Interviews were conducted according to participant's time.

Furthermore, confidentiality was upheld and respondents' choice to withdraw from the research was guaranteed. They could also ask questions or seek clarification on all issues involved in the study. They were not be identified by name, but some biographical data was needed, (qualifications and years of experience). Pseudo names were used to further enhance privacy of both the school and the educators. The results of the study will be made available for scrutiny to the school and the participants.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter motivated and described the design and plan for this research.. A brief discussion of the core research questions that needed to be answered during this research was also included. The data collection methods, a description of the site, a primary school in Phoenix, was discussed. A description of the educators and the sample followed thereafter. The methods used in data gathering, interviews, observations and documents were explained and argued for. Each method was discussed individually focusing on the advantages and disadvantages, plan for data collection, limitations, trustworthiness and ethics.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Data – Changing Curriculum

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the data that was gathered in the study is presented. The data are analyzed and interpreted. While the interview data provided a major part of the analysis process, the observations and documents lent support and substantiated the themes that were identified. In this chapter the responses of the educators to the critical questions are described and explained. :

1. What changes have been effected in literacy (English) in Foundation Phase?
2. How do Foundation phase teachers experience these changes?

In response to the first critical question, the educators shared their opinions, examples and ideas from their own practice and spoke about their own views and beliefs as English educators. They responded specifically about what they did in their teaching, therefore the dialogue was about what they were actually doing.

The second critical question was based on observations and the interview data. The observations were conducted with all educators and all the components of English were observed. One lesson per educator was observed per day. The observations took a week to complete.

In response to the second critical question observations were done. During lesson observations the following sections were the focal points which are outlined in the table below.

Table 11: Lesson Observation

| EDUCATOR | GUIDED READING L1 *Giant Treasury level 1-3 *Happy Holidays | SHARED READING L2 Workbook | SENTENCE/ PARAGRAPH WRITING L3 *Workbook | PHONICS L4 *Workbook | LANGUAGE L5 *Workbook *Comprehensive English Practice | AIM OF LESSON |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | L1- Learners can read unseen pages |
| Jabu | X | X | X | X | X | L2-Learners can make predictions and answer questions critically |
| Rani | X | X | X | X | X | L3-Learners can write simple and compound sentences, use Language and Phonic skills effectively. |
| Mary | X | | | | | L4-Blend sounds and construct words |
| Kalay | X | X | X | X | X | L5-Learners make sense of concepts and use them in written and oral work. |

To maintain confidentiality, their own names were not used. All of the educators were given a pseudonym, Teacher A (Jabu), Teacher B (Rani) and Teacher D (Kalay) and Teacher C (Mary) were from Alethico Primary school. The direct responses of the educators were used to add richness and authenticity to the study.

In response to the first critical question which is the perceptions and understanding of change that have been affected the following themes emerged: Conceptualization of the curriculum; Curriculum change – expectations; Specified content and preparation; Lower level learners and Language challenges.

The above themes were interrogated in order to write up the text of the educator's narrative. The educators' responses are italicized to differentiate from the normal discussion of the thesis.

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Conceptualizing the curriculum

The first theme that developed was Conceptualization of the Curriculum when educators were asked what their understanding was of a curriculum. Kalay mentioned that from her experience as a Foundation phase educator she discovered that the educator's task is to ensure that learners develop cognitively as well as emotionally.

Jabu enunciated,

“It is a set of work that is set by the department to be achieved by the learner.”

The educator understands that the curriculum is important for the learner's development and that the department of basic education highlights what must be taught and when this must be taught. For the curriculum to be successful the learner has to achieve the milestones.

Jabu further stated that,

“This should be achieved within a certain period of time.”

Stenhouse (1975, p. 5) added that curriculum should, “provide a basis for planning a course, studying it empirically and considering the grounds of its justification.”

Rani also supported that,

“All the subjects you teach would make up a curriculum.”

However Mary, had a different view on curriculum. She stated that a,

“Curriculum looks at academic as well as extra- curricular activities and learning activities that will support the enhancement of learners and it is quite vast.”

Even Kalay approached the definition of curriculum differently. She felt that a curriculum is the document that encompasses all the skills and knowledge that a learner should know about the subjects he / she is learning. This curriculum helps to develop the learner holistically. The English curriculum is of paramount importance, it lays the foundation for all other future learning for the learner. The sounds that the child learns are converted into words, develops into sentences and hence effective speech. The main aim therefore is to make the learner literate – he /she should learn how to read and write.

Kalay and Mary expressed the view that they found that no subject should be isolated and supported the integration of subjects. Referring to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) document wherein it is stated that the listening and speaking skills are developed in Creative Arts, they asserted that there are specific milestones described in the CAPS document and that it is the educator’s task to “ensure this is achieved by the learner within a specific period”. For example, in term 1, the learner should be able to write a sentence with correct punctuation, that is, begin with a capital letter, use a full stop, comma, question mark or exclamation mark where necessary. If he or she does not learn this, all subsequent writing will be incorrect.

The responses of the participants indicate they have an understanding of curriculum that concurs with the definition given by Barnhardt (2014) who states that curriculum in its conservative practice, refers to the “scope and purpose” of the subject-matter expressed in a school. He further points out that curriculum development, spotlights the collection and grouping of the exact knowledge and skills necessary for the developmental requirements of the learner and the exclusive functioning structure of the school. Curriculum development does not clearly address the social circumstances of learning, nor does it study the fundamental cultural processes whereby the content is assimilated and used. The participants’ ideas also allude to the considerations of curriculum given by Darling-Hammond, Orcutt, and Cheung (2001) who describe the utility of curriculum in the social,

emotional, cognitive and physical goals of children, as well encouraging critical thinking, reasoning, decision making, and problem solving. The participants' ideas are also aligned with Goodlad and Su (1992) who explain curriculum as a blueprint.

All respondents acknowledged that the curriculum develops learners learning at school and provides the necessary skills and knowledge for the learner. Educators understood that a curriculum was pivotal to learners' progressing to the next grade and moulding the learner holistically. Educators have to ensure that they deliver this curriculum to learners by using different teaching methods.

4.2.2 OBE Pedagogy verse CAPS Pedagogy

In response to the question on OBE, Kalay stressed that through the years of her teaching she has discovered that there are various curricular that was used to ensure that the learner's educational needs are met. It involved the knowledge, skills and habits of educators that are transferred to the learners through teaching. It also involved the learning goals that are set by both the learner and educator. Curricular aims to develop the learner holistically.

Upon interaction with the CAPS document, she has learnt that it provides a clear, methodical content and knowledge to fulfill the precise curriculum aims. The curriculum policy and guideline documents, report on the apprehensions of changeover between grades and phases, assessment and textbooks. The participants felt that the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) was unsuccessful in helping educators to choose social knowledge. It focused on nation building and the schooling system, and schools and teachers had to relate it to their settings. With OBE teachers were bogged with too much paper work, actual teaching was hampered. CAPS is a single comprehensive document that is teacher and learner friendly.

4.2.3 Assessment

Emerging from the data is another area of concern, viz. assessment. Jabu commented that CAPS is superior to OBE as CAPS is more "defined" suggesting it is better because of its structure, where:

“Each term clearly indicates what needs to be taught, time allocation is provided also for the completion of these tasks. OBE did not have this structured curricular.”

Rani also agreed,

“In OBE, there were no specifics, right now in the curriculum, with CAPS, you have specific content, you have workbooks, you have the CAPS document and you know exactly what is expected, what you must cover in each term.”

Inherent in the responses of the participants is an agreement that assessment is required. Chuckett and Sutherland (2000) and Sebyeng (2006) state that assessment must be an on-going process, and learners must be able to develop critical thinking, reflection reasoning and action. Ngidi (2006) emphasizes that assessment assists educators in understanding learner's achievements and needs. Thus the participants do not critique the idea of assessment as a concept on its own, but the type and structure of assessment that they believe clearly differs between OBE and CAPS.

Jabu and Rani both indicated that assessments are clearly indicated in the CAPS document. This has ensured that educators are not preparing more tests than what is required.

In OBE assessment focused on achieving outcomes. Assessment in OBE is a process of “gathering valid and reliable information about the performance of the learner, an on-going basis against clearly defined criteria using a variety of methods, tools and techniques, recording and reporting feedback to learners, other educators, parents and other stakeholders” (DoE, 2001, p. 12). With OBE there are two methods of assessing student's learning outcomes: ‘Standard-referenced assessment’ and Student portfolios detailing their development (Wills and Kisane, 1995). Continuous assessment was also done with OBE. The following different forms of assessment were prevalent in OBE: baseline assessment, diagnostic assessment, summative assessment, formative assessment, non-referenced assessment and criterion-referenced assessment (DOE, 2002). Learners also wrote various Systemic research evaluations tests. With CAPS, at the beginning of the term a baseline assessment is also done. There are also suggestions for informal assessment and formal assessments to be conducted for each component in English.

However, with OBE there were no distinct policy guidelines. The usage of numerous assessments, which caused an abundance of paper work, became burdensome for educators. Language policy and mother tongue instructions for Grades 1, 2 and 3 produced great anxiety for educators and learners.

In this regard, Mary pointed out that CAPS seeks to allow teachers to interpret the curriculum. Teachers are not loaded with countless planning. OBE is very student centered, this difference between the two curricula was made by Jabu and Rani above.

Assessment has changed a great deal over the years, and Flanagan (1998, p. 75) states the subsequent reasons for the change is due to many learners failing at the end of Grade 1, “some learners do not work during the year but still pass to the next grade. Some learners do not write things well and the knowledge which learners need to obtain is changing”.

Another important introduction into the education system in order to increase learner excellence is the Annual National Assessments (ANA) in literacy and numeracy for Grades 1-6. This change in the curriculum was observed by all the participants. The purpose of ANA which was introduced in 2010 was to provide a national benchmark by which learners can assess their capability and help schools analyze problem areas and devise improvements.

The CAPS curricula is regarded as an improvement over the OBE by the participants as it allowed the educators to be well planned for their lessons, and know clearly what was very specific expected of them in the classroom. OBE focused on learning outcomes and work schedules, CAPS content was very specific and clearly outlined for teachers. Hence it was earmarked for success from the date of implementation.

In sum, educators noted that the change to the new curriculum is better than OBE. Their workload and manner of approaching their teaching has changed. CAPS offers a streamlined curriculum and focuses on the learner, OBE did not.

4.2.4 Expectations of Curriculum Change

In South Africa, the curriculum has been changed many times. Educational transformation in South Africa is intensely historic and constitutional. Researchers such as Jansen (1998,

1999) and Chisholm (2004, 2005) have commented on this. The occurrences in education can be closely linked to developments in the world and also in the nation.

The response to the question on whether it has been easy or difficult to make sense of the latest curriculum, namely CAPS, Jabu stated that for him as a first time teacher of Foundation Phase learners, it was difficult, and that “it was a learning curve for him”. He was not thoroughly prepared to teach in Foundation phase. He “found this very challenging and somewhat hampered his teaching”.

Rani said that it was her first year teaching from university, so CAPS would be the only thing that she knows. She has not taught using any of the other methods, or any of the other curricular. It was quite a big difference from OBE in which she was trained. This suggests that there is also a discord at the tertiary institute in terms of the trainee teacher preparedness for the implementation of the new curriculum. Whether there is sufficient conversation between the Department of Basic and Teacher Training institutes to ensure that their final year students would be familiar with proposed developments for education is possibly a topic for further research.

Mary who is a seasoned educator indicated that, *“educators welcomed the change because clearly rote learning alone was insufficient.”*

Kalay stressed that the main change is the emphasis on Reading. She stated that the Department of Basic Education’s observation about learners struggling with reading is to be commended since this is an area where “their progress is hampered. Kalay suggested that *“This has been a very good observation by the Education department because many of our learners struggle with reading and hence their progress is hampered. This is an excellent change CAPS is an excellent curriculum. It is designed very well, it focuses on teaching the basics to learners. It has not been difficult to work with CAPS, because in Foundation phase, this is strategies we have been teaching according to.”*

According to Kalay, learners are able to critically develop their thinking skills and give their own views and opinions when questions are posed to them. Motivation is related to whether or not students have chances to be independent and to make essential educational selections. Kalay also emphatically pointed out that having choices lets children feel that they have control over their personal learning. This assists them acquire a sense of accountability and self-motivation. When students sense appreciation, they desire to absorb themselves in

academic tasks and preserve in learning. The educator and the curriculum play a crucial role in inspiring learners and ensuring they complete their studies successfully. When educating youthful learners we continually have to remember that we have a diverse class with wide-ranging abilities, prospects, inspiration levels, and knowledge and learning styles. Our approaches must be varied and give every child the opportunity to expand and grow. “Effective teachers treat all students the same, regardless of their culture, socioeconomic status, or special needs. They continuously express their confidence in students’ ability to succeed”⁸.

Kalay also asserts that *“We must remember that every classroom has a wide range of learners that have different abilities, knowledge, confidence, motivation and learning styles. An educator teacher should offer a stimulating environment”*.

According to Kalay, merging the approaches, fluctuating the cognitive styles, integrating and corresponding numerous methods and tools give the students maximum variety and offers them sufficient opportunities to be actively involved in communicative situations, simultaneously building strategies that will assist them later on when their knowledge of English has increased.

The data indicates that the participants feel that in trying to achieve better results, the government tries to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the learner and education system. A school prepares a learner for the workplace which helps to boost the economy and ensures growth in a country. Hence, the need to change or adjust the curriculum becomes necessary.

4.2.5 Clearly specified content and Preparation

The response of all participants to the question about Curriculum change and the effect it has on their teaching, all educators speak about Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) and compares it to Outcomes Based Education (OBE). Jabu believes that he knows very little about OBE, but he was clear about the fact that it was more centered on achieving outcomes, it was somewhat abstract.

⁸ www.sagepub.com/upm-data/39272_2.pdf, p. 30

Mary on the other hand said,

“The problem with it was that the demands of the paper work was intense. I think that group worked well to some degree in OBE but there were lots of problems that came along with it.”

The really effective change regarding the Curriculum was that the content was clearly specified and the manner in which the curriculum was designed. Jabu felt that the content of CAPS is greater than that of OBE, as OBE did not have any “specifics”. He felt that with CAPS,

“you have specific content, you have workbooks, you have the CAPS document and you know exactly what is expected, what you must cover, I think that is the most important change that I feel. “

Mary also reiterated this point that they now have a clearer focus in terms of English because the syllabus is clearly demarcated into the different areas, it makes it better for the educator to deal with as *“it moves away from rote learning and is getting learners to try to be critical thinkers.”*

Kalay also recalled that the time allocation in the CAPS document assisted the educator to plan his or her lessons properly. English was clearly outlined in the CAPS document, the following structures explain the plan.

According to the CAPS policy document, in the Foundation Phase, the skills in the Home language are:

Table 12: Skills in Home Language-Department of Basic Education (2012, p.10)

| | |
|--|---|
| Listening and speaking Reading and Phonics Writing and handwriting | Thinking and Reasoning and Language Structure and Use which are integrated into all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) |
|--|---|

The content covered in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) has been organized in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), per term, utilizing these headings. The CAPS document provides educators with: an introduction with guidelines on how to utilise the Foundation phase document, content, concepts and skills to be taught per term;

guidelines for time allocation; requirements for the Formal Assessment Activities and suggestions for informal assessment and lists of recommended resources per grade.

In the Foundations for Learning policy (policy prior to CAPS) that was introduced in 2008, Oral work was for 10 minutes per day; Listening and Speaking was 20 minutes per week; Phonics was 15 minutes per day; Shared Reading was also 15 minutes per day; Group guided reading was 30 minutes per day; Writing was the same as in the above table; Handwriting 30 minutes per week and Reading for Enjoyment was for 30 minutes per day. This document had also provided educators with lesson plans, an overview of the entire term's work as well as a weekly overview, the document also outlined a daily lesson plan for educators and an overview of Assessment tasks. With CAPS, the above table depicts the changes from the Foundations for Learning. Unfortunately Jabu and Rani could not effectively manage their time allocations in their classes because they only saw their learners for English and for a limited time in the day. They had to ensure that all work was covered in their classes within that time and if it was not, they were unable to repeat the lessons.

Listening and speaking are crucial skills hence, in the Foundation Phase, time is specifically devoted to the progress of these two crucial skills. Oral work is done each morning.

According to the 2011 ANA report learners previously wrote standardized tests. Now the participants are more accountable and have to complete the work that is laid out in the policy document. The Annual National Assessment (ANA) covers a certain scope of work and it has to be completed prior to the examinations. It is imperative that the learners complete all sections of the syllabus. The resources have also enabled the educator to be more effective in class. Educators have received a resource pack that is common to everyone in all schools country wide. The workbooks contain exercises that supplement the teaching in class. All learners within grade 3 are working very well within these common parameters. This effective change to the curriculum ensures the educator meets his / her benchmarks for the term. The questions in the workbook are similar to the types of questions in the ANA examinations.

Rani suggests the benefit of this that of *“having help in doing your lesson plans and knowing exactly what to teach”*.

The lesson plans are integral for the success of any lesson. A well planned and well written lesson plan ensured your lesson was successful. This change in the curriculum is very positive. Rani added since the content is clearly laid out, CAPS appears to be the best curriculum. This she supports from her personal experience as she asserts that:

“Even though I was not trained in the Junior Primary or work-shopped properly, it is so well done, that I was able to work with it”.

Although she feels that it is a superior curriculum, she is still able to discern its weaknesses as she suggests that there is insufficient assistance to teach learners the concepts in English, and since these are not clear, she has to still *“supplement it with other resources”*.

After years of experimenting with various curricula, the taskforce that designed CAPS have developed a curriculum that educators in my study can understand and with which they can effectively work. The educators are very impressed with the manner in which CAPS is designed and that it is a very workable and user friendly curriculum. This fact is expressed by all participants.

Jabu felt that *“the content of CAPS is easy to understand”* and that, *“Everything is clearly laid out in the support materials that have been provided. It is more defined as compared to OBE where you had to make your curriculum and where you decided what to teach.”*

Jabu expresses that the CAPS document is more defined and has facilitated his teaching as the specifics are given and helps an educator understand exactly what is required, making *“the life of an educator easy”*.

Such comments, as enunciated by Rani as well, clearly speaks to how educators experience these changes to the curriculum. Rani explains that the educator has exactly what they need to teach according to timelines and that *“there are guidelines for each term”*.

Mary further elaborated,

“CAPS has been designed very well. It assists the educator at every step. The guidelines are easy to follow and are very realistic.”

Kalay explains that from her personal interaction with the CAPS document she has *“discovered that it is designed in the similar manner in which Foundation phase educators are trained as educators. It tackles teaching at grass roots level. It emphasizes the need to*

establish a firm foundation for the learner. This means that the learner can thoroughly grasps the content with the proper knowledge and skills. ”

A work schedule and an Assessment plan indicates what needs to be taught and assessed in the term. This is another important change in the curriculum. Educators have a time frame in which to meet their benchmarks for each section of their teaching.

Kalay further elaborated that unlike previous curricular, educators are at last comfortable with working with the new curriculum. In a detailed article in the Curriculum News (May 2011, p.13), the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga, indicated that prior to the CAPS curriculum being introduced, many stakeholders were consulted and their inputs were considered. Perhaps due to the failure of OBE the government wanted to ensure this was not repeated.

Mary enunciated that educators were bogged with too much of paper work and recording, very little assistance was offered to educators. Educators had to figure out how to develop a work schedule and implement it. With CAPS, this was reviewed and from the comments of the educators they are positive that this curriculum is better.

Relevant charts are also part of an educator resource pack that is included with the new curriculum. This adds immense strength to the lesson content and pupils have a reference in their learning.

Rani also echoed these sentiments. She has proper directions on what to do and when to do it.

‘I think for me CAPS was easy. You are given specific things you are expected just to cover. As an educator you are seeing what you must do. So for me it makes the life of an educator easy. You have everything.’

Kalay elaborated that children should learn and apply it to their everyday lives. A curriculum, she added, should meet the requirements of the learners and must be very relevant and should be applicable to learners. There should be continuity in their learning. This is an important change in the curriculum and addresses critical question 2. All the participants agreed that the CAPS curriculum was relevant particularly in terms of its emphasis on reading and writing as literacy is a problem in South Africa. Rani suggested however that although a curriculum needs to be relevant it must also meet the needs of the

learners, and this could be done by drawing on the experiences of the learners since not many textbooks “correlate with CAPS. This meant that educators had to find resources to supplement certain sections, experiences that Jabu concurs with, suggesting that educators must be aware of the context and levels at which learners operate and adjust their teaching accordingly.

According to Kalay, Foundation Phase is the stepping stone for all future learning. It provides the learner with a solid grounding and prepares him or her for the other grades. The listening and speaking skills are very crucial skills and these are constantly being emphasized and developed in Foundation Phase. This is an important change in the curriculum and addresses critical question 2, how do Foundation Phase teachers experience these changes?

All participants understood the importance of the concept of literacy, and the importance of establishing a good foundation and continuity from the early stages of the learners’ schooling. Rani suggests that the sequential development must take place from grade 1, otherwise learners “*are going to struggle when they come to grade 3*”. As Jabu explained that he had to “*start again*” with his grade three learners in some cases, from grade I work because the learners could not even write their names.

Foundation phase stimulates learners’ learning. As the learner passes through each grade, their learning also progresses. Some learners may not be able to cope in each grade as was apparent in the discussion by the participants, but majority of the learners cope very well. The educator helps their learning to develop and ensures that the learner receives as much stimulus as possible during the Foundation Phase. They ensure the learner has access to the curriculum which reinforces their increasing eloquence and proficiency in English. This change from other curricula was appreciated by the educators. They found that it was a workable curriculum, it provided ample assistance to the educators. Educators could focus on teaching learners and the administration of the curriculum was already done. Educators were able to impart the necessary basic skills to learners and focus on their weaknesses.

What emerges from the data is that the participants feel that the introduction of CAPS is one of the best curricula provided by the Department of Education thus far, as it is structured, systematic, takes into account time lines and addresses the crucial aspects of reading and writing that was lacking in other curricula like OBE, RNCS and NCS. The content, concepts and skills and reading activities that need to be taught is very specific and are highlighted for

each term. The Assessment and suggested Assessment activities are also highlighted. These requirements guide and assist the educator in his or her teaching.

4.2.6 Lower Level Learners

Many researchers have written about learners that have performed well below par. These include Janzen (2008); Goldenberg (2012); August and Shanahan (2012) and Olsen and Saunder and Marcelleti (2013). According to Jabu most of the learners that come into school are not very well prepared hence the creation of lower level learners. According to Kalay, from her experience through the years she has discovered that educators focus a lot on where they want their students to be. She proclaimed that educators work tirelessly to ensure that learners are successful at school, however they are more challenged when working with lower level learners. She found that public schools face many challenges in preparing learners in the information stage in a progressively varied and aggressive worldwide market. She emphasized that Foundation phase was the most important phase in the learner's schooling. Through her years of teaching she had discovered that all learners had specific needs and in order for learners to progress smoothly from one grade to another, it was important that they achieved all their milestones. She stressed that the task becomes tough for the educator that is teaching the learner currently if the learner is struggling. This point was also brought out very strongly by Jabu who described that some of his learners could not even write.

This was confirmed during observations that some learners it was noted that some learners were struggling with writing sentences. In Rani's classes, the slow learners could write, but not very coherently. An observation with both participants was that with the slow learners, their sentence construction was very poor. They could only write simple sentences and their Spelling was also poor. If they were able to write, some learners wrote very slowly and did not complete their work.

Figure 6: Sample of learner's written work (Jabu's class)

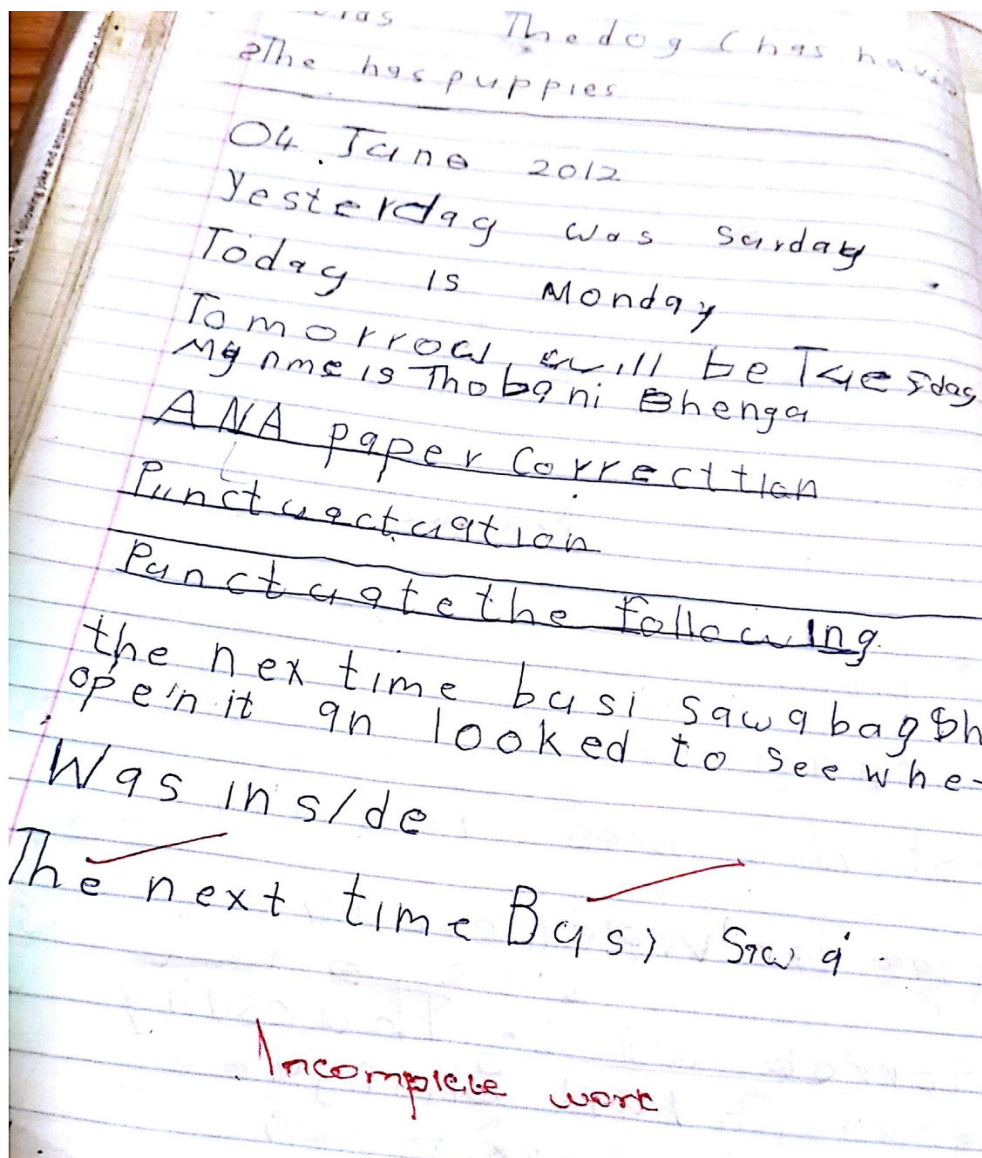
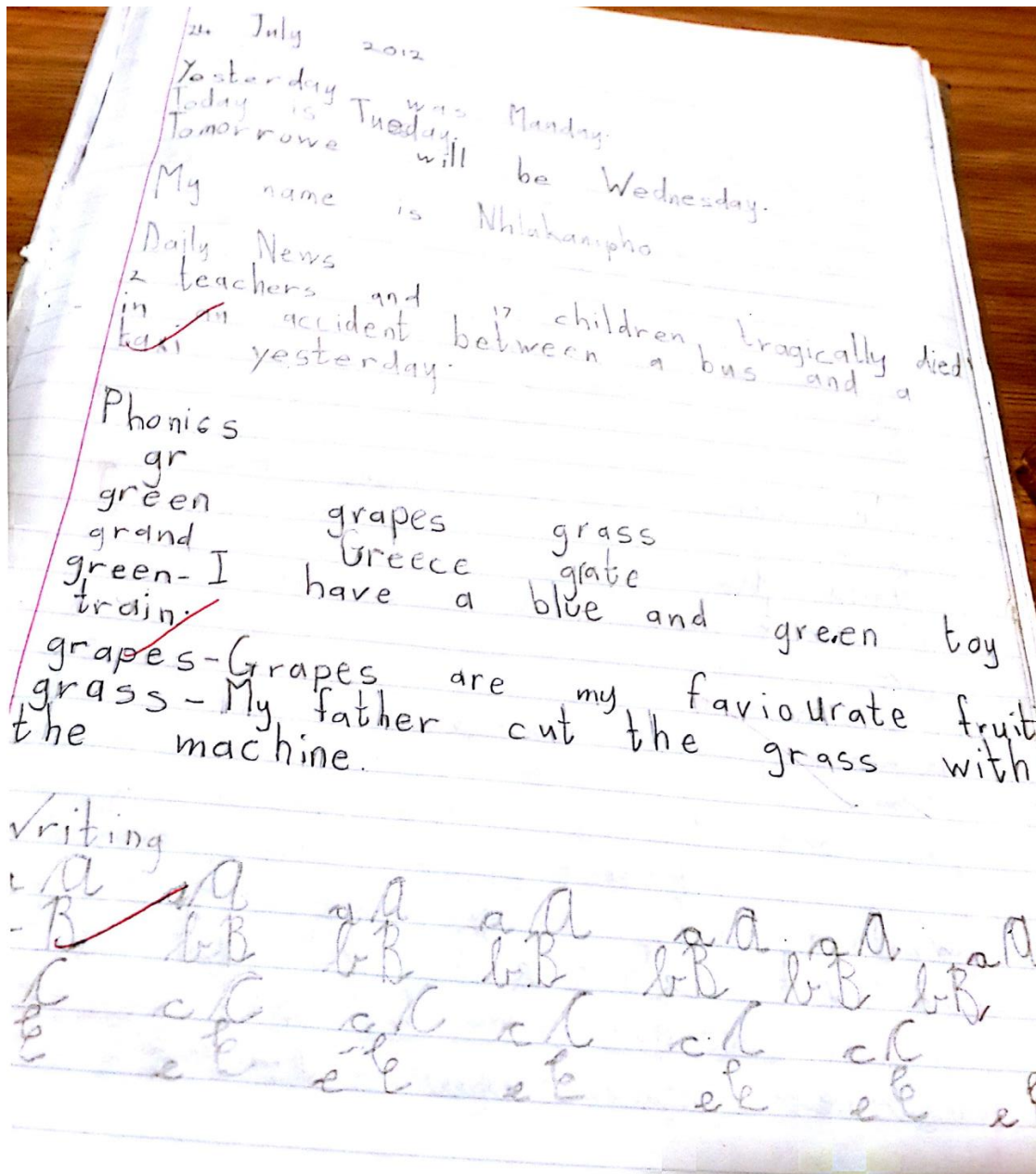


Figure 7: Sample of learner's work (Rani's class)



In the first sample (Jabu's class), the work is incomplete. Although the learner copied the work from the chalkboard, there are spelling errors and the presentation is very untidy. The

second sample (Rani's class) is neater. The learner constructed simple sentences, but there are spelling errors.

The above responses clearly highlight critical question 2, that is, the difficulties experienced by Foundation Phase teachers. It is clearly evident that educators are struggling to cope with certain aspects of the curriculum with the lower level learners.

The language levels are very important to educators. It helps educators to provide appropriate support for learners. When learners learn English as a second language, they progress through various levels in English. Two of the levels pertinent to this study according to ELDStrategies.com (2011) are discussed below:

Level 1 – Beginning level: Learners at this stage cannot understand or work independently with English. As learners progress through this stage, they begin to communicate non-verbally to instructions, reports and enquiries. As their verbal comprehension builds up, they begin to use basic words and phrases.

Level 2 -Early Intermediate: These students can communicate basic ideas with simple sentences. Learner can read basic stories and engage in simple discussions. They normally err in word usage, pronunciation and grammar.

In this study it was found that most of the learners were at these two levels as described above. The educators had to constantly modify the lessons to cater for the learners. Rani stressed that the lower level learners could not cope with the workload and seeing their educators for a limited period of time added to learner's problems. She found that most times, their work was incomplete and if they did not understand a concept, there was no time for remedial work and homework was never done. Hence the response to the lessons were not very successful. Learners could not be retained after school because many travelled with lift clubs. Jabu also indicated that their classes were large and it was difficult for them to assist all the lower level learners. He indicated that time constraints also complicated this issue. Both Jabu and Rani emphasized that an important factor was that both of them were not qualified and were very inexperienced in Foundation phase. They did not have the essential skills to assist them in their teaching. They saw this as a barrier for the learners and themselves. Mary and Kalay were experienced Foundation phase educators. They had subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge to assist them in their teaching. Thus they were very successful in their classrooms.

Mary who is with her learners the entire day, does not have this problem with her lower level learners. Mary,

“My lower level learners are able to approach me at any time they experience a problem with any section in any learning area. Whilst the other learners are busy I work with a few learners at my table.”

Kalay added that from her experience in the Foundation phase, she has discovered that if the educator is with the learners the entire day, she is able to manage her time and also work with the slow learners. This is done when learners are busy with the day’s work. She either works individually or with a group, in this way the group is gainfully occupied the entire day. She is able to focus on the weak areas and remediate any errors simultaneously. She is also able to focus on one aspect and ensure learners grasp this concept or section before moving onto a new set of work. She stressed that repetition was very important, learners hear the instructions constantly are able to understand the educator better. Once the learner understands this, all later learning is easy.

From the data it emerges that, lower level learners demand a lot from the educator. From the inception of formal schooling, learners have to be closely monitored and worked with to prevent them from lagging behind. Jabu and Rani as first time Foundation phase educators were not able to effectively support and assist their lower level learners. Certain tasks in CAPS require learners to work independently. The document allows for differentiated assessment for these learners, however, all the lower level learners may be unable to complete the task.

4.2.7 Parental support

In the past parents were not as involved in their children’s learning. The respondents believed that greater parental support is a critical component of the changed curriculum. Nowadays parents are getting more and more involved in the preparation for their children in terms of reading and phonics. Kalay also agreed with this.

In the following responses from the participants in the study, the importance of competency in English at home, and the lack of parental support for the learners at this school, are described.

According to Kalay, parents played a pivotal role in the learner’s life.

Jabu also re-iterated this point,

” ... many of the learners live with their caregivers who in most cases are the grandparents or relatives of the learner. Most of the grandparents are illiterate or too old to come to school or do not communicate fluently in English”.

Jabu suggests that this is a major problem for educators as the contact between the learner's homes and school is not “strongly formed” which makes the class tasks more difficult as teachers have to work hard to teach and ensure that all the work is completed in class. This occurs because there is no supervision at home, or the inability of the caregivers to supervise the child's work. Rani indicated that bridges need to be built between the home and school, for the new curriculum the bridge between home and school is important. These comments on the importance of parental involvement alludes to the research by the Michigan Department of Education (2002) where it was found that non-involvement of parents is a major setback in public schools. Faltis (1993) also asserts that the focus must be on building bridges between the school and home that develops along four levels, namely, initiating personal communication with parents and caregivers by means of causal discussions; secondly, sharing information in the home about schooling; thirdly, participation of parents in their children's studying at home and parents' participation in school related activities, and fourthly, where parents play a more decisive role in curricular and policy decisions at school. These depend on the mutual trust and bond that forms between the school and certain parents that want to invest extra time and effort in the schooling process. Henderson and Berla (1994, p.160) share similar ideas about parents becoming “involved in their children's education at school and in the community”. These points are further elaborated by Epstein (1995, pp. 701-712) who refer to six kinds of parental involvement in schools, “Parenting: provide basic facilities housing, health, nutrition and safety for their children; Communicating; Volunteering; Learning at home; Decision making and Collaborating with the Community”.

Kalay found that her learners who had the support of their parents in terms of monitoring their homework, assisting them with studying for a test or just reading with them, performed better at school.

Rani highlighted that learners that do reside with their parents are also very apathetic towards the learners' performance at school. When a parent meeting is held or when reports are to be collected at the end of a term, parent response is very poor. Not even a quarter of the parents in each class respond to a meeting. Hence they cannot discuss the learner's performance. The parents of the learners that need to meet with them do not come to school.

“Learners rely to a great extent on their parents for guidance and support in their studies. Parents facilitate learners' learning at home by assisting them with homework and ensuring it is completed because, homework helps to re-enforce what was taught at school. These actions send out a very strong message to the learner.”

However not all learners are fortunate to enjoy this support as was highlighted by Jabu,

“No the problem you see again goes back to the background of the learner, because if the learner is starting from a family that has support, helps with the homework that works for the learner, if you have a learner who does not have the support, then the problems they are having in school is huge. You have an educator who does not understand the learner and a learner who does not understand the educator, this is a problem.”

The data suggests that participants feel that although educators try their level best to provide learners with the best possible opportunities for learning, children perform well at school if they are motivated by their parents. At this site many of the learners live with extended families and not much support is given to them as was indicated by Jabu's response. The only learning occurs at school. Participants in my study feel that, if parents do not include themselves in their child's education, learners do not adopt the correct attitude towards school and they are not motivated to perform well at school. If the learner is unable to read very well, there is no one at home that can assist him or her. It is entirely the educator's task to ensure the learner can read. Where there are huge classes, especially in Foundation Phase, this is a daunting task for the educator. When parents get involved with their children from an early age the outcomes are better. Parents' actions are very important.

Kalay emphasized that educators try their level best to provide learners with the best possible opportunities for learning. Children perform well at school if they are motivated by their parents, at this site many of the learners live with extended families and not much support is

given to them as was indicated by Jabu's response. The only learning occurs at school. If the learner is unable to read very well, there is no one at home that can assist him or her. It is entirely the educator's task to ensure the learner can read. In sites where there are huge classes especially in Foundation Phase, this is a daunting task for the educator.

The responses of the participants above indicate that, if parents do not include themselves in their child's education, learners do not adopt the correct attitude towards school and they are not motivated to perform well at school. Majority of the learners at this site did not have the support of their parents. From the above discussion it can be clearly noted that parents play a huge role in the learner's schooling. Lack of parental support hinders learners' progress and motivation at school, a point made by all participants in the study.

4.2.8 Language Challenges

4.2.8.1 English Language Difficulty

At this site many of the Black learners spoke their mother tongue, IsiZulu, at home. At school they were taught in English, therefore they could not adequately cope with English. When asked how the second language learners are coping with English,

Jabu responded,

“Our learners are not home language English speaking learners, so it is a bit difficult for them to just grasp the concept. They had weaknesses, as I previously mentioned, the language barrier, most learners also do not have parents so they do not have anyone to help them with homework, as a result these barriers are making the learners' lives more complicated. That is what I discovered. They also have problems writing in English, their word order is not very good. Their spelling is also not good.”

South Africa has 11 official languages. Previously, language has been a major challenge for learners and teachers. Dr Carole Bloch, (2012) director at the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) at the University of Cape Town, commented that the condition for eras has been for all children to study in their mother tongue for the initial three years of school. In Grade 4, second language-speaking children have to change to English. Professor Thabisile Buthelezi, head of the School of Education Studies at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (2013) stated that parents have the perception that their children are afforded better status if they learn at a school where the LoLT is

English. From the interviews with the participants it was evident that another factor of teachers' experience of curriculum change was the language challenges.

Semantics can be the main obstacle to literacy. In an article, "*Do language barriers affect student performance in school?*" by Elsworth which appeared in the Global Post, it was noted that languages is important for learner success. Yearly millions of learners nation-wide enter classrooms who incapable of speaking the same language as the educator. One of the paramount tests educators experience is providing operative instructional syllabi for learners who are studying English as a second language. In the United States itself, English language students are one of the quickest developing populations in the educational system. According to the National Centre for Education Statistics, the amount of children from 5 and 17 years of age who did not converse in English at home improved from 4.7 million to 11.2 million in 2009. When a person converses in an unwritten language and must learn to read in an unfamiliar language, it can be a perplexing and challenging process.

Learners who do not study in their mother tongue experience problems. They struggle with many components in English. This can also become stressful for the learner. However, learners at this site, were taught IsiZulu from Grade R. It was the new enrollment of learners that have more difficulties in English.

During observations in Language, Sentence construction and Phonic, the researcher found this to be quite evident in their written work. Some learners wrote in IsiZulu. It is these learners that do not have support from their parents to assist them with English that cannot speak or write properly. The situation is awkward, parents do not want to converse with the educator, due to their lack of fluency, so they are unaware of their child's performance in class. Thus homework may not always be completed or completed satisfactorily.

This complicates their lives more, as was pointed out by Rani,

When it comes to writing their stories it is not as good because of their lack of speaking English at home. There is no exposure to English so they cannot construct sentences in a normal English way, and their concord is incorrect."

Kalay however, had success with her IsiZulu learners. She has found that the learners that are attentive in class, complete their tasks and homework are succeeding in the class. She did admit however that challenges do arise when learners have not acquired the necessary skills

in English. They experience difficulty with their reading, writing and speaking. They confuse letters and sounds and their reading is very slow, they struggle with comprehension and retention.

Some learners enrolled at this site came from African schools that only taught in English from grade 3 upwards. Due to movement of their families, these learners enroll from schools in areas like Western Cape, Transkei and Kwa Dukuza. English erudition for them was exclusively a classroom involvement, there is no exposure to English at home and in their society. The problem in African schools is that there are limited textbooks and materials to cater for the requirements of children, also that a many teachers are not adequately trained and under qualified and their expertise in English as LoLT is inadequate.

From the above discussion, it is evident that language impacted on learners acquiring knowledge and skills.

4.2.8.2 Code Switching

Code switching refers to as Hoffman (1991) found “the alternate use of two or more languages within similar expression or during the similar discussion. Furthermore, Hughes et al (2006) revealed that code-switching becomes a common, traditional and language tool that allows learners to assimilate their understandings of two languages and two cultures into a unified whole. He explained that in order to facilitate learners’ responses and understanding of the lesson he used code-switching. Probyn (2009) states that code-switching is used by teachers for intellectual causes due to learners’ limited English proficiency, and that teachers also choose to code-switch to achieve emotional goals. Uys and Dulm (2011, p. 3) found that code-switching is used in ‘explaining and clarifying subject content, in assisting learners in understanding and interpreting material, as a tool of teaching in confirming understanding and encouraging participation, in classroom management, such as maintaining learners; attention and reprimanding disruptive behavior and for social functions, such as humor and as a marker of bilingual identity’. Moreover, Setati (2001) found it useful in clarifying connotations and developing English grammatical capability, to restate an opinion and for operational commitments for example, to adjust learners’ grammatical requirements by reducing the breach among educators and classrooms.

Code switching is alternating between two languages, in this case between English and isiZulu. Studies conducted have shown that code switching is very effective (Lowi, 2005 and Shogren, 2002).

Jabu found that code switching was an effective way of communicating and teaching learners:

“For me the language was not a problem. I am bilingual. That worked for me. Since many of our learners are Zulu speakers, the learners were able to understand me. I was able to use this language to help learners.”

The amount of IsiZulu learners entering schools all over Kwa-Zulu Natal are increasing, these schools are faced with meeting their educational requirements. These learners possess fluctuating levels of mastery of the English language. A few learners that start school are fluent in either English or IsiZulu only or both English and IsiZulu. They possess a minimal vocabulary in English. It is these learners who have puzzled educators and caused them to re-evaluate their teaching strategies.

Zentella (1985) suggests that code-switching has multi-functions: it may conceal fluency or memory difficulties when one engages in the new language, it may be used when switching from formal situations to informal situations, sometimes parents may use it to exercise control over children and speakers may use it to associate with others. Johnson, (2000, p. 184), elaborates that, Code-switching also 'functions to announce specific identities, create certain meanings, and facilitate particular interpersonal relationships'. The teacher adjusts his/her language conferring to the topic that is being discussed. This occurs mainly in grammar that the teacher code switches as was noted with Jabu. The students' attention is redirected to the latest knowledge by making use of code switching. A link from the native language to a new foreign language is constructed in order to transfer the new content and meaning is made clearer. Cole (1998) also conferred with this, “a teacher can exploit students' previous L1 learning experience to increase their understanding of L2”.

This strategy that the above participant used was his response to critical question 2.

The capacity to code switch is a crucial asset in the teaching process as is shown with Jabu. It helped him to clarify, confer, improve the quality of information flow, adjust and regulate classroom activities. Code switching can produce success in learning. However there were

some learners who also did not understand Jabu even when he code switched to their mother tongue.

Kalay also added,

“From my own experience with learners I also discovered that code switching works with some learners.”

Ellis(1994), Cook (2001), Richards & Rodgers (2001) and Widdowson (2003) who have been investigating second language teaching and learning ascertain that, although acquainting children with the target language, this may not be successful with all children.

Kalay also added that there are many learners who are enthusiastic and due to their exposure to brothers and sisters in higher grades who help them, perform well, as well as the circumstances of being in an English medium school from the beginning. Rani also suggested that there are learners who are more exposed to English, and due to their attentiveness are able to model the educator’s English. My observation indicated that this was quite evident in their work. These learners responded to the lessons quite well. There are also learners who despite all obstacles can produce outstanding results as well. They watch and learn very successfully.

Some of the teaching approaches can use that multiplicity have been culturally and linguistically diverse, and they can use that multiplicity as a catalyst to expand education. With the introduction of CAPS, IsiZulu, is an additional language in the Foundation Phase as from this year (2014).

According to the responses of the participants, code switching is effective to an extent. Although Jabu code switched in his lessons, he was not very successful with all his learners. There was some improvement in their response to the lessons.

4.2.9 Professional Development

In the past workshops were offered to educators which were more comprehensive but the assumption was that when the change occurred educators were already familiar with the curriculum so they did not have to be work-shopped so intensively as was done when OBE

was introduced. Workshops are integral to the success of any curriculum that is being implemented. They help to guarantee that excellence in education is enhanced. If it is not done properly a huge amount of money and time is wasted. These workshops are conducted by well- trained facilitators who understand clearly what each subject entails. Educators are work-shopped and given support to ensure the smooth implementation of the curriculum. If educators are encountering any problems, the work-shops and support structures are meant to assist them. The work-shops should be comprehensive and should cover all aspects of the curriculum.

However, this may not always be the case as was highlighted by all participants. In answering critical questions 1 and 2, the workshops form an integral component of the participants' responses. Workshops are meant to prepare the educators for implementation of a new curriculum. In answering whether educators were work-shopped and adequately trained by the Department of Education in the implementation of CAPS, Jabu responded, that going for workshops once a year is insufficient, and not effective as they are not "thorough and not specific" to each grade or phase. He suggests that more comprehensive and regular workshops by facilitators who are more familiar with the phase requirements of the curriculum are essential. Rani concurred that:

"The workshops were not very comprehensive, the facilitators rushed through the workshop, and it is crammed in a short space of time.

Rani suggested that a longer period, teaching actual skills and implementation of CAPS by someone from the Foundation phase is necessary. Mary also asserts that two short workshops a year with such large amounts of reading material "does not really qualify one to be fully experienced and ready to take on a new curriculum". She states that the workshops are more theoretical and the real issues and problems are not dealt with, suggesting the teacher actually learns more in their daily teaching.

Bennel (2010) pointed out that low education attainment and inadequate professional training are the main reasons for low competency levels among Primary School teachers. Low commitment levels further aggravate poor teaching performance and quality. There should be continuous professional development. School teachers should receive regular, targeted and good quality in-service training. In the above two cases (Jabu and Rani), teacher motivation was too low. The workshops they attended were not good, their learner performance in the classroom and unhelpful education agents did not ease the situation.

Kalay also expressed her displeasure at the manner in which the workshops were conducted asserting that the facilitator was not familiar with the document.

“Unlike OBE, the workshops were not very informative. It was actually an information session. OBE training was very comprehensive, it was for a week and everything was unpacked successfully, CAPS was not.

CAPS will have positive effects in the Foundation phase, if educators followed the guidelines in the document properly, learning will be more effective. Learners are responding very well to CAPS, they are becoming familiar with the content and methods of teaching because it is very relevant to them.

Educators that are disgruntled with their occupations and are inadequately encouraged are not expected to execute their tasks very well. The poor behavior as well as performance of teachers is reported to have reached crisis levels in some countries. The key indicators of this are low and declining learning outcomes, high rates of teacher attrition and teacher absenteeism, low time-on-task, frequent strikes and other forms of industrial action, and widespread teacher misconduct (UNESCO, 2011, p. 3).

CAPS will have positive effects in the Foundation phase, if educators follow the guidelines in the document properly, learning will be very effective. Learners are responding very well to CAPS, they are becoming familiar with the content and methods of teaching because it is very relevant to them.

The problem of the poor quality of workshop presentation and its effectiveness to in understanding the curriculum which was highlighted by all the participants is a national problem. According to an article in the Mail and Guardian on 17th of August 2012, many educators share the same sentiments. Unions have also disapproved of the worth of the workshops that occurred country wide throughout the June vacations. In the same article, Carol Bertram of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's School of Education, has repeated this apprehension. She is not assured that the CAPS teaching workshops will be effective, “what many teachers need is to build deep disciplinary knowledge and knowledge of how to effectively teach their particular subject to the particular learners in their class. Once-off workshops seldom lead to deep teacher learning and transformed professional quality.”

Walter Hlaise, echoed the same fears that a four day workshop will be insufficient to prepare educators for implementing a new curriculum (Mail and Guardian, 17 August 2012).

Here again the time factor was highlighted. The workshops should be experiential, participatory, there must be hands-on activities, but unfortunately this was not the case . Kalay enunciated that from her own experience, the workshops that she attended, were the same.

“The lady that conducted our workshop arrived an hour late and instead of focusing on the curriculum change, she related stories that concerned her personal life.”

In answering what kind of support was received from the school, Jabu responded,

“We were work-shopped on the implementation of CAPS. But here again it was not done by people that teach in Foundation phase. My supervisor was also challenged because she is not trained in Junior Primary.”

Here again the reasons for this arrangement at this site were unclear. There were two appointed Foundation Phase educators at this site, but they did not supervise this grade. In fact they did not supervise any Foundation phase grade. They were allocated other management functions. The educators that supervised this phase were level one educators who had no teaching experience or qualification in Foundation phase.

Executing such transformations to the schools has necessitated huge fundamental transformations to curricula and standards, but the main component in the achievement of the transformations is having qualified and self-assured educators to distribute the new curriculum, and increasing the quantity of these educators has been a priority. Recently qualified educators must possess subject matter and didactic understanding to distribute the subjects successfully.

When a new curriculum is introduced, it is imperative that educators are well trained to handle the implementation of that curriculum. This was not effectively handled by the Department of Basic Education or the site. In order to provide support, educators need to get first-hand knowledge of how to teach in a particular grade. Foundation phase is a very crucial period in the learner’s life.

The educator has to be trained, mentored and supervised by someone that has knowledge of Foundation phase. Not just any educator can teach in the Foundation Phase. The educator needs to understand the learner and work with the learner to ensure effective teaching and learning is being achieved. Both the educators were not Foundation Phase educators,

Jabu explained this point,

“Because it was a new experience to teach in a Foundation phase, I found it very difficult and I did not get enough support that was difficult. I was not trained in the Junior Primary phase.”

Rani further elaborated,

“It is my first year teaching from university and I was trained to teach Mathematics.”

Kalay added that from teaching in the Foundation phase, she has learnt that the educator promotes the learner’s societal, emotive, academic and physical growth. He/ she knows how to juggle time to get maximum work done in the classroom. He or she knows how to expose the learners to new and difficult concepts in a manner in which the students will be capable to comprehend, recall and remember effectively.

“The foundation phase educator prepares the lesson in great detail, researches new methods and teaching aids thus developing student’s interests and abilities. Also, through the years, these are refined allowing the educator to become expert in her teaching.”

The international evidence shows that the providing of consistent, systematic and extraordinary excellent in-service guidance is crucial in order to guarantee the accomplishment of reliable extraordinary instructing values (Schwille and Dembele, 2007). The national education plan in Tanzania, states that ‘there is no national system for in-service training and most primary school teachers have no access to further training after they start work as teachers’ (Bennell, 2009, p.14). In Malawi, a different primary school curriculum was presented in 2007 and educators were trained every fortnight for four months at Teacher Development Centers (staffed by Primary Education Advisers). Similar CPD interventions have been adopted in other countries. In Madagascar, for example, ‘self-directed kits’ are provided for teachers in key subjects and regional teacher resource centers are equipped with computers and solar panels.

The above training schedule is essential for educators in South Africa as well. It motivates educators and makes them feel worthwhile. In the case of Rani and Jabu it was imperative that they receive as much support as possible, since it was their first year in Foundation phase, and they needed hands on guidance and support. The workshops have to also be worthwhile to educators.

4. 2. 10 Positive impact of CAPS

There is nothing more exhilarating to educators than knowing that the curriculum you are engaging is, very workable and can ensure success in the classroom and that learners are performing very well. This theme is in response to critical question 2. The previous curriculum was amended because the results were not very good. CAPS has been introduced to develop the value of education and studying in our schools.

It is clear that CAPS is a workable curriculum. It focuses on teaching learners the basic concepts. Educators are already noting some success with this curriculum. All participants express this view,

Jabu, *“it is impacting positively on the Foundation Phase.”*

Rani, *“it is a very workable curriculum.”*

Mary, *“for the first time we have a curriculum that is very good.”*

CAPS focuses on the skills and values that must be taught to learners, and the learners should apply it to their life. It is very specific.

In an article by Michelle Jones which appeared in the Cape Times on 11th July 2012 entitled, *“Teachers take to new curriculum”*, the following sentiments were echoed regarding teachers’ perceptions about CAPS. CAPS is very specific, the topics, time management and assessments are clearly highlighted and educators are working well.

It is imperative that a curriculum arranges increasingly multifaceted, deeper and broader expectations for learners, the CAPS curriculum has been refined and takes into consideration the interests of the learner. The CAPS curriculum specifies the theories, proficiencies and ethics per grade, inclusive of the range of knowledge and appraisal activities per phase,

contains the content that offer the speed and the ordering of these activities every year including examples of lesson plans to be applied at any time.

4.2.11 Specialization Approaches

At this site educators and learners were exposed to specialization at Grade 3 level. This meant that, the educators only taught English in the Grade 3 classes. The other subjects, Mathematics and Lifeskills were taught by other educators. The Grade 3 classes were not form based. This call was very strong from the management therefore educators had to experience specialization within CAPS. The SMT's reasoning behind this allocation was that learners will be able to adjust in grade three and when they get to grade four they will be familiar with the routine and will not encounter so many problems. However, there was very little success noted with specialization at this site. This fact was clearly elucidated by Jabu. In answering whether the results improved or not,

Jabu answered that it improved a little, but specialization in the Foundation Phase was problematic since,

“As an educator, if you have your learner full time, you can work in all aspects of English, but if you have a learner for a specific period of time, there is no way you can overcome these problems. You need to identify the problem and work out a plan of how to overcome it.”

Subject teaching or specialisation has become a contentious debate. Teaching a particular subject has effects that are farfetched in the lives of learners that pass through the system. The few points below are general views on the advantages of the system.

1. Schemes and plans of work can be compounded. Lesson preparations for one class can be used for the other class within the same Standard.
2. Performance appraisal objectives can be achieved easily. The educator has very specific and highly streamlined tasks, accomplishment of which is a simple linear progression where a stage by stage method is expended. This is opposed to the holistic approach of class teaching, where the learner's progress is measured wholesomely.

Specialization helps the learner perform well in a subject. Learners in senior primary and inter-mediate phases are exposed to this specialization of subjects. Learners in Foundation phase are exposed to just their form educators, except for Physical Education.

The Foundation Phase educator plans her time effectively, so that she accomplishes teaching all these components in her class. If for some reason she has not been able to meet her goals for that day, upon reflection of her teaching, she will review ways on which she can improve. At this site this was not possible, because, the educators saw the learners for a limited period of time. Immediately this is a challenge for the educators and the learners. As per the time allocation in the table below for Grade 3, it is clearly highlighted how English should be broken down and taught in the classroom.

Jabu and Rani had learners that write too slowly, they were not able to complete their work within the specified time. When questioned as to whether learners were coping with the work and completing it, both educators stated that they were not. This is a problem that was also encountered as was discussed in an article, *Subject specialization, a blessing or disadvantage?* by Jowawa (2012). The following observations were noted:

1. Learners were not finishing their work timeously. They were being overloaded with work. The result was shoddy work that was hurried through and general low levels of retention of learnt concepts.
2. The teaching of English in primary school is a challenge. English as a second language needs to be monitored very closely. Other educators are encouraged in all subjects to develop English but unfortunately this cannot be accomplished. Evidence of this is shown by the failure in spelling by second language learners of English.

According to Kalay, whether or not one system seems to be the better of the two, it is the education and life of the innocent children that need to take precedence. Individual schools have the liberty to use a system that best help them attain their objectives and uphold their mission statement. Whichever system is used, it must be learner oriented and aimed at producing society fitting, adequately educated and autonomous product of education.

Jabu enunciated,

“It is my first year, so I have been struggling with them, with the time and how much time needs to be spent, so that has been a real problem for me. This is a grave problem for educators that specialize. They encounter many problems in the classroom.”

Apart from the learners experiencing challenges the educators were themselves challenged. Both educators were new to Foundation phase, and specialization did not really work for them. They had to try and make the situation work for them. This point was highlighted by Jabu who suggested that he was trying several methods to find which works.

From the observations, Mary did not specialize in her school. She remained the entire day with her learners and taught them all the learning areas, that is, English, Mathematics and Lifeskills. She had time to work with her learners during the day. Whilst the rest of the learners were busy with occupational work, she was able to assist her slow learners.

From the interviews it can be said that no other known school had adopted this kind of teaching in grade 3. In all schools the form educator teaches English, Mathematics and Lifeskills to his/her learners. Clearly the specialized teaching at this site was both challenging to the educators and learners. Although content was being taught to the learners, they were not reaping the benefits. They could not complete their work and the educator spent too little time with them, hence no enrichment work could be given to them.

4.2.12 New Reading Experiences

In CAPS much focus is placed on Reading. When Jabu was asked about the changes in the new curriculum, and in his opinion, which of these changes have been educationally sound, and furthered the main aims and objectives of a Foundation phase Literacy Curriculum, he replied that the main aim is to make everyone literate, with CAPS, there is a lot of focus on Reading. This statement concurs with the policy. Mary also re-iterated this point that CAPS “also acknowledges the different types of reading giving the learners some degree of growth in their Reading and simultaneously integrating this into language structure and usage.” These ideas concur with the policy.

According to the CAPS document, Reading is fragmented into Shared Reading (including Shared Writing), Group Guided Reading, Paired / Independent Reading and Phonics (including Phonemic Awareness)

According to Kalay, “*when we read we construct meaning of the written text. Such an activity requires a common understanding of the language and understanding of letters and sounds. Reading is done for pleasure or information, and occurs all the time reading whether one is at school or home, or driving or walking. By reading either loudly, individually or in groups grammar and vocabulary is extended. We need different strategies when we read.*”

The Stages of Reading Development – Department of Education (2008) is a range that elucidates how learners advance as readers. These phases are centered on the learners' involvement and not their maturity or ranking. Recognizing these stages is useful when gathering materials for the precise sorts of readers.

- **Emergent readers**-need inspiring and entertaining involvement with books,
- **Early readers**- children use numerous strategies to guess a word. The background of the story is discussed to gain a better comprehension of the story.
- **Transitional readers**-books are read in a series. Reading is done at a good pace. At this stage, children generally possess most words but still require assistance to understand challenging texts.
- **Fluent readers**-confident and fluent readers. The teacher emphasizes learner competence in using strategies to integrate the prompting systems. Learners read complex material.

4.2.12.1 Reading English: Group Guided Reading

From the observations it was evident that most of the learners at this site were either Early or Emergent readers which formed the bulk of Jabu’s class. Very few learners from Kalay’s and Rani’s classes were fluent readers. A good reader understands that books effects people's thoughts. The above explanation clearly highlights how the learner is developed during reading. This strengthens the educator’s teaching skills and strategies in the classroom.

During *group guided time* the educator works with a few learners and guides them to cultivate their reading and writing skills which occurs every day. While the educator works with these learners, the remainder of the learners are busy with their own work. The groups are formed according to their reading ability. he tight structure and time allocated to this time guarantees that each element is brief, absorbed and stimulating to the students. Pronunciation and expression is highlighted. Since the Foundation phase educator is form based a lot can

be achieved, as group guided reading can be staggered the entire day. When we read, we familiarize ourselves with words and phrases thus we improve ourselves as was noted by Mary,

“I think they have improved in their reading where they can sound words they can pick up words easier and their pronunciation and their phonics improves.”

But at this site, spending extra time with the learners was not possible, specialization did not allow the educators to achieve that. Time was of an essence to them both. As a result the critical learners struggled with English. They could not draw on years of experience or applying what had worked for them in previous years to apply it in their current teaching.

From the observations it was found that Jabu grouped learners in rows according to ability groups, however very slow learners were paired with a good learner. Jabu found that these learners were able to assist the slow learners with their work. He followed the same procedure in all his classes.

They were settled and were asked to take out their Readers first in English then in IsiZulu, *“Ngicela nikiphe umubhuku enu”* (“Please take out your readers”).

(Giant Treasury: this book has three levels, 3; 4 and 5 year old. The books are also color coded: green, red and blue respectively). Learners took out their respective readers.

Group 1 – Blue -5 year old

Group 2 – Red -4 year old

Group 3 – Green -3 year old

Each Reader consisted of thirty five stories. The stories in level 1 were long, the stories in level two were average and in level 3 were very short. The pictures took up bulk of the space in the page.

Figure 8: Example of level 3 Reader: Maitland, Holliday, Joseph, Barret, Milford and Caryl, 2010, p. 94



Sophie and Sam took Peep back
to Mrs. Tring.
Mrs. Tring stroked Peep.
Peep began to purr.
Mrs. Tring smiled.
“Thank you for helping!”
she said.

Figure 9: Example of level 2 Reader: Chancellor, Irvin, Harker, Payne and Ellsworth 2010, p.104

“Is something wrong?” asked Molly’s mom.

“It’s silly really, but I think my house is haunted!” Mrs. Dimley replied.

Molly grew excited. She loved ghost stories.

“At night, I can hear bumping, tapping, and rustling noises coming from my attic,” explained Mrs. Dimley.

Molly’s mom made Mrs. Dimley a cup of coffee, and Mrs. Dimley said she felt better.

But the next morning, when Molly and Carlos were helping Molly’s dad in the



Figure 10: Example of Level 1 Reader: Posner et al, 2010, p. 73



An old lady popped her head out of a high window. "Go away!" she shouted. "It's too late for visitors!"

"But King Sten sent us, Mistress Swift!" Chee called up to her.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mistress Swift. "Then I suppose you'd better come up," she said. A few minutes later, the door to the tower opened and Mistress Swift let them in.

"Mistress Swift, I've come to seek your help," Joe told her. "I need you to give me the torn-up pieces of the magic picture you hid for the king."

Each group read their relevant reader firstly in unison. Whilst one group was reading, the other learners sat quietly and listened.

Figure 11: Sample of reading page from group 1, page 137 of the Reader

“Maybe we could put on a surprise show for Molly this afternoon.”
They hurried into the house to tell Kayla’s mom. Molly was in the living room, watching TV with Jordan and Tom. She looked at her leg in a cast and sniffed sadly.
Kayla’s mom thought the surprise show was a great idea. “I’ll make some phone calls and invite people over,” she said.
“We need Cinderella, Prince Charming, and a fairy godmother,” said Emily. She turned to Ava. “You’re the tallest, Ava. You should be Prince Charming.”
Ava nodded. “I’ll wear my crown.”
“I’ll be the fairy godmother,” said Mia.
“My sister’s got some fairy wings and a wand.”
“Great,” said Emily. “Kayla, you be Cinderella. I’ll be the clock to chime out midnight. I’ll make a clock mask.”
“I’ll wear my old party dress,”

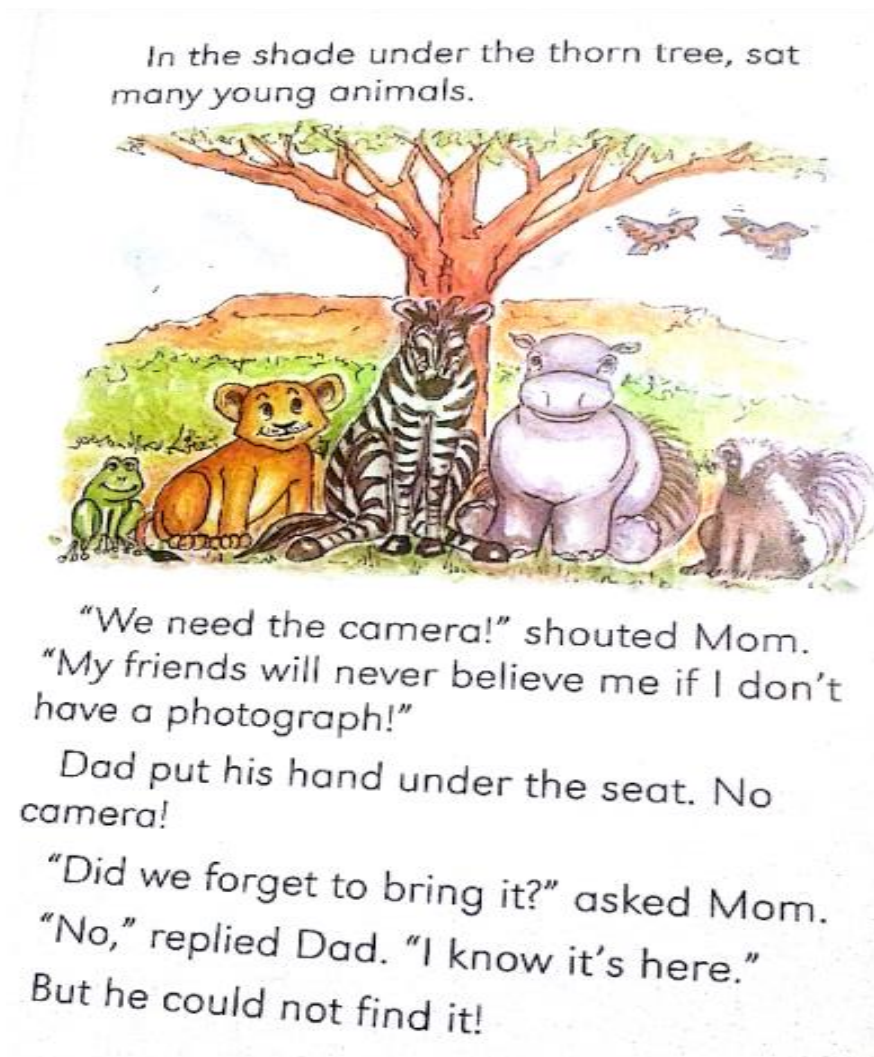
Jabu asked the learners to read unseen pages. Whilst learners were reading, very few of them, read with expression. They read in a sing song voice. The first group read very well,

pronounced words well, could identify sight words. A few learners in group 2 were able to read the story. The third group of learners could not read well. In fact they could not read without Jabu's assistance. He had to say some of the words to assist the learners. He reminded the learners that these were the pages they had read the previous day, first in English and then in IsiZulu.

"Sifunde ama-pages afanayo izolo."

After learners read this reader they all read another book, "Happy Holidays" in unison. It was quite a simple book for grade 3 level. It consisted of 7 pages which was a level 5 book. The following is an example of the Reader.

Figure 12: Whole class reader



The children read the above book in unison.

During *group guided time* the educator works with a few learners and guides them to cultivate their reading and writing skills which occurs every day. While the educator works with these learners, the remainder of the learners were busy with their own work. The groups are formed according to their reading ability. The tight structure and time allocated to this time guarantees that each element is brief, absorbed and stimulating to the students.

Pronunciation and expression is highlighted. Since the Foundation phase educator is form based a lot can be achieved, as group guided reading can be staggered the entire day. When we read, we familiarize ourselves with words and phrases thus we improve ourselves as was noted by Mary,

“I think they have improved in their reading where they can sound words they can pick up words easier and their pronunciation and their phonics improves.”

But at this site, spending extra time with the learners was not possible, specialization did not allow the educators to achieve that. Time was of an essence to them both. As a result the critical learners did not benefit greatly from both participants whose teaching of English in the Foundation phase, was a first for them. They could not draw on years of experience or applying what had worked for them in previous years to apply it in their current teaching.

With Jabu, group guided reading was very difficult. He had extremely weak learners in his classes. Although he divided his class into different levels, this did not help since the “problem was huge”. Jabu suggested that many of the learners were not at grade 3 level and because he was specializing, that left him with very little time to focus on each learner separately especially the weaker ones. Jabu expresses his exasperation when he says he “*had one learner who could not even hold the pen” let alone trying to take the few readers in his class to help other weaker learners, which made it “very difficult”*.

The fact that their supervisor was also not trained in Foundation phase also did not help.

There are steps involved in Group–Guided reading: Selecting an appropriate text, Introducing the book or chapter to be read, Picture talk or browsing, First Reading and Discussion and Second and Subsequent Reading. Both Jabu and Rani could not identify that Shared Reading

was an addition into the curriculum. Whilst Jabu, had a problem with his classes, Mary did not,

“I think they have improved in their reading where they can sound words they can pick up words easier and their pronunciation and their phonic are a bit more fluent.”

The learners at this site were graded according to their ability and as a result Jabu had mainly slow learners and Rani had a mixture of good learners and a few lower level learners.

Both participants engaged the learners in rote reading. They found that this method worked well for them.

Jabu commented,

“Very few could read I was trying to push them to be able to identify words when they are reading.”

Rani elaborated,

“The repetition of them looking at the words and saying the words over and over again, they get used to those words and they can pick up the words, its familiar to them they can read faster.”

According to WiseGeek.com (2009), rote learning encourages learners to parrot facts without them really understanding them. It also does not encourage them to question or analyze the information they have learned. However, at this site, rote reading was necessary. These learners had to develop the basic reading skills so that they could continue to develop their critical thinking skills, memorizing words and phrases. An interesting discovery with both educators is that neither of them flashed the words to learners although the most well-known way to rote memorization is flashcards. It was seen as time consuming.

A further skill was that the learner’s phonetic reflex must be developed by drilling the learner in the letter-sound combinations. This was also not done by both educators.

As previously stated during Observation it was discovered that the books that were used during Group Guided Reading were for 3, 4, 5 and 6 year age groups and these learners could not read them. The learners read the little sections in the workbooks as shared reading.

Although the site has a library, all learners at the site do not choose their own books to read,

the educator gets a batch and distributes to the learners, however, these learners were not exposed to that.

The observations however, in Rani's classes were different. For all her classes, the following observations were noted. The same Readers that Jabu used were also used by Rani. Learners from group 3 were called out to read. The relevant readers were given to learners. Rani flashed words from the reader that were difficult for learners. Learners repeated these words thrice. Learners opened to the relevant story and chorus read the story. Rani then asked individual learners to read. Very few learners could read on their own and with expression. They were also unable to recognize simple sight words that they had previously learnt. Learners could not break up the word and pronounce it. Not all the learners were following the story in their books. They were looking around the classroom and smiling at each other. It was evident from the learners' response that the educator does not read daily with this group. The rest of the learners were busy with occupational work, but there were some learners that were not completing their work. They were becoming disruptive.

In her second class, Rani read with the first group. Learners were called to the carpet area with their Readers. The educator had not read with this group or any group from the first level to the third level of the Reader. She just judged from their class performance they were suited to a particular Reader and she grouped them. Each learner opened to the relevant story and chorus read. Thereafter, individual learners were asked to read. A few read with expression. She did not flash any words from the text for the learners and revise any Phonics.

Their speed of reading was also not very fast. They read in a sing song manner. It was evident from learners reading that the Reader was unsuitable for them. They were able to read books that contained challenging stories. The other learners were engaged in occupational work. There were a few learners that were being disruptive and Rani warned them that they would forgo their lunch break if their work was not completed, they quickly settled down and continued working.

In the third class, Rani read with the second group. She called them to the carpet area. Some learners took a while to respond. Rani handed out the readers to the learners. They opened to the relevant story and read in a chorus. Thereafter individual learners read the same pages. The learners also read unseen pages. Again it was noted that the Reader was unsuitable for the learners.

There were a few learners that read with expression and were able to read unseen words. The rest read in a sing song voice. The readers were not sufficient for the entire group, some learners found it difficult to follow. Rani asked the learners questions on what they had read,

“Can anyone tell me a little about what we read?”

Learners answered incompletely,

Learner 1, *“Ghosts!”*

Rani explained to the learners that they need to answer in full sentences. Thereafter learners responded in complete sentences.

Learner 2: *“The story was about squirrels that were mistaken for ghosts.”*

The rest of the class quietly and completed their work. The siren signaled the end of the lesson.

Here again, the reading group was too big and not taking place every day. The policy document highlights that reading should take place every day and the group should be between 6 to 10 learners. At least two groups should read with the educator. Rani would bring the learners to the carpet area but she had large groups and the readers were not sufficient for all. Prior to the reading lesson Rani did not do a Phonics activity of sounds already taught or pick out the sounds from the story and go over with the learners. The book was not introduced to learners.

From the interviews, according to Kalay, she did a baseline test for learners at the beginning of the year and then grouped learners. As they read she made notes in a book and discussed this with learners. She read daily with learners. She flashed words from the text, constructed oral sentences, emphasized pronunciation and fluency. She also questioned learners on the text to check their understanding of what was read. She encouraged independent reading, library books, magazines and newspapers are available for learners to read. They were also given a book to take home and read, this was recorded on a Reading Card, which had to be signed by their parent upon completion of reading the stipulated pages. This ensured that they read at home as well – used as enrichment work.

She read to the learners daily. The critical readers would receive extra attention. They were given extra reading lessons after school.

There are three main phases for a lesson.

Before Reading: An educator will use contextual data, build scheme, set reasons for reading, and previews the text. The group engages in prediction, learns unfamiliar words and discusses text features. The group also does a “picture walk”.

During Reading: Learners read independently. The educator monitors learners deciphering and understanding. Learners are questioned.

After Reading: The educator questions learners about what was read.

The above steps were not done by both educators. They did not introduce the book to learners, predict the storyline, draw attention to the language structures, build learners’ interest in the story, question learners about what was read, do a Comprehension check or do a picture walk of the book.

According to Burkins and Croft (2010) the following aspects are part of a guided reading strategy: functioning with little groups, complementing learner reading proficiency to text stages, offering everybody the similar textbook, presenting the text, paying attention to learners reading, encouraging learners to incorporate their reading activities and involving learners in discussions relating to the text. This method is very successful. It stimulates learners and helps them to develop into critical thinkers. Guided reading, if done correctly, has produced immense success worldwide. In the United States of America, Guided Reading is a crucial element to the Reading workshop model of literacy teaching. Guided reading is done every day in schools in England and Wales and every child is involved

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guided_reading) Challenges exist in all grades, but with the educator’s dedication and commitment learners can make advancement in reading.

Conferring with Fountas and Pinnell (1996, p. 1) “some students will work on very basic reading skills such as word analysis and comprehending simple texts” and “ all students need instructional support so they can expand their competence across a greater variety of increasingly challenging texts.”

Both educators did not complete a Reading age assessment for the learners, they did not call learners and test them so as to ascertain their appropriate reading age. There was also no evidence of flash testing of the words to determine how well learners knew the words.

The educator has to plan and organize him/herself properly for the successful implementation of Guided Reading so that it caters for all learners. In *Teaching Reading in the Early Grades – Teacher’s Handbook*, (DOE, 2008), a plan for Reading is highlighted. It focuses on the teacher acting as a role model for learners, teaching reading strategies to learners (re-reading, reading ahead, using pictures) providing opportunities for discussion, teamwork, a rich and varied environment, using operative exercises for involving students in huge groups, little groups and independent reading and using philosophical exercise, observing the groups and a selection of appraisal approaches to recognize each learner’s requirements and offer different teaching. The CAPS document also makes reference to the *Teacher’s Handbook* and teachers should refer to this Handbook when teaching Reading.

It is clearly evident that the educators were not thoroughly work-shopped by the department or the school to assist them in teaching reading to their learners. They did not follow the policy or familiarize themselves with the procedures, hence they approached the teaching guided reading incorrectly.

4.2.12.2 Shared Reading

Jabu greeted learners and settled them down, Jabu asked the learners to take out their workbooks and turn to the respective page. The shared reading was a dialogue. It was a very simple extract. Individual learners (mostly the good learners) read each part, other learners followed in their books. This was done three times. Thereafter the learners read in unison. Some of the learners paid attention, while others were preoccupied with their own activities. Thereafter all learners read each part together.

Jabu asked the learners,

“Can anyone tell me a little about what we read?”

He explained this instruction in IsiZulu,

“Ukhona ongangitshela kafushane ngalokhu esikufundayo.”

The learners were eager to answer him and shouted out the answers.

Jabu asked them to settle down and to raise their hands. Some learners answered him correctly.

Sipho (a learner) said,

“The children have returned to school after their holidays.”

Cindy (also a learner) said,

“The children returned to school and discovered that it was Winter”.

They were able to answer in complex sentences. When learners were asked to make predictions on the extract, very few learners could. Some of the learners sat expressionless. It was evident that some of the learners were bored and restless at the end of the lesson.

In the second class, the learners read a story. Jabu read a sentence at a time and learners repeated in unison. He chose a few good learners to read and the class responded in unison. When Jabu asked the learners about their feelings on the story, one child, gave a very deep answer. He related it to his own experiences. There were a few learners that were not following in their books, they appeared to be lost. Jabu spoke to them in IsiZulu, and a few focused on their books.

This lesson was observed half way through the year. The policy states that the texts selected should increase in length and complexity. Unfortunately in one of Jabu’s classes this was not so. The text was fairly simple, hence not much discussion was done on the text. He also did not discuss the language patterns and phonics or the author and the title of the story. When the lesson observation was done Jabu was using a text from Term 1 Week 1, he should be using Term 2.

In Rani’s class she greeted the learners and settled down. They were asked to take out their workbooks. Rani introduced the lesson that they will be doing, a Shared Reading lesson and read an extract from the workbook on a “School concert”. Rani read the instructions and learners responded in unison. Rani asked the learners to look at the picture.

“What do you see class?” asked Rani.

Learners responded differently. Rani affirmed their responses. Rani read the instructions on the ticket and asked the learners why a ticket is made. Learners responded that it gave one, admittance to a number of different activities, in this case the concert. Rani then read the programme. She brought in the 3 tenses – Past, Present and Future. She highlighted that this shared reading was in the Future tense. Individual learners read the passage (The School

Concert). Rani proceeded to ask questions on the passage. Learners responded well. A few learners that did answer gave the incorrect answer. A few learners were distracted, they did not follow the reading, when Rani asked them, and they appeared confused.

In the second class, Rani followed the same presentation of her lesson (Tenses). An interesting observation in this class was that learners were very enthusiastic about the reading and wanted to read more extracts, however Rani informed them that time was limited and this could not be done. They will have another lesson the following week.

In Rani's third class, she did a lesson on shared reading, learners read the Reader, Giant Stories. The learners read in unison. They could identify the sight words. However, due to the long story there were a few learners that were distracted and were not paying attention to the lesson. In all three classes, learners could make predictions on the story that they had read. This demonstrated that they had grasped the content of the story very well.

It was evident that consistency in lesson presentation was not being followed. The same extracts for shared reading were not being done with all the classes that the educator taught. No explanation was offered for this. According to the policy document the text must be used over a day or two. The texts that Rani used were simple. In this regard, Rani also did not follow policy, regarding the complexity of texts. The educator did not discuss the title or the author or to retell the story in their own words. Here again participants deviated from the CAPS policy. It is possible in Jabu's case the CAPS prescriptions were too demanding hence he was still doing term 1 work in term 2.

Shared reading was introduced by Don Holdaway in 1979. Shared reading is one component of the English curriculum. Many academics like, Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui and Stoolmiller, (2004); Fisher, Frey and Lapp, (2008); McKeown and Beck, (2006), have deliberated the importance of shared reading for student's language achievement and the connection linking terminology and understanding. Fisher (2008) acknowledged four sections of teaching that educators who are proficient in shared reading in grades 3 through 8 confirmed: understanding, language, text structures and features. Both the participants tried to cover these sections in their classes, but due to the short duration of their lessons, this could not successfully be achieved.

According to Bridge, Winogard and Haley, (1983); Pikulski and Kellner, (1992), through recurrent readings and the expectable text, learners become acquainted with language and begin to identify words and expressions.

4.2.13 Writing

4.2.13.1 Sentence / Paragraph writing–Difficulties experienced

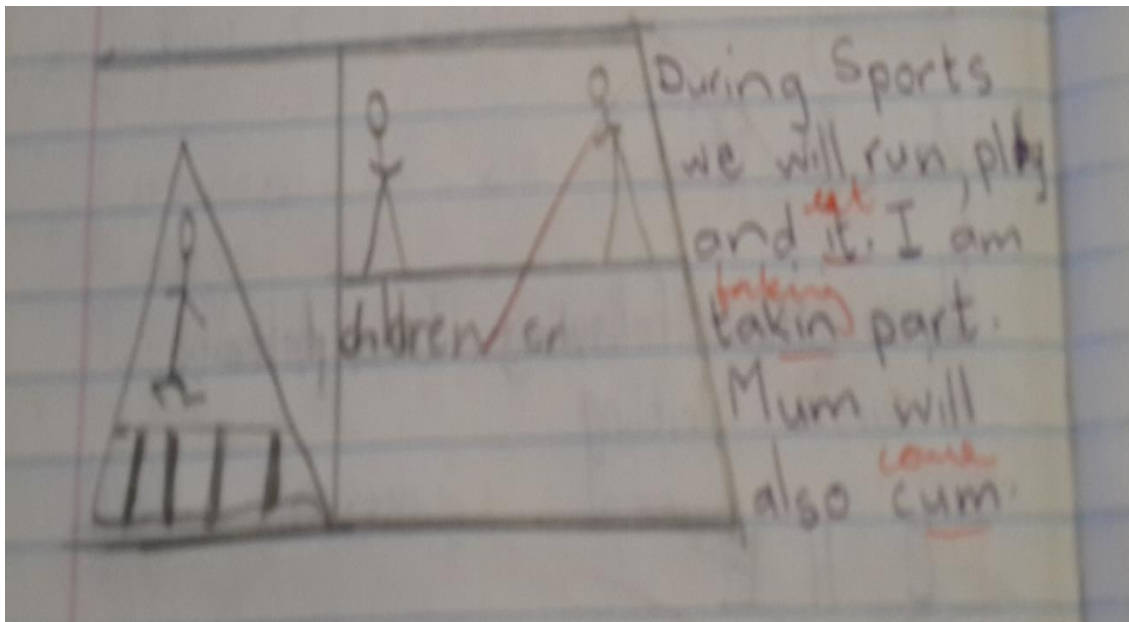
In Jabu’s first class, he began the lesson by introducing the topic that they will be writing on. He read a story from the workbook on Sports. This was done only once. The educator asked learners questions on the definition of sports. Not many learners were able to answer him.

He also code-switched to IsiZulu.

“Lisho ukuthini igama ezemidlalo.”

He then asked learners what activities are done on a sports day. Learners responded by saying” *running, relay, sack race and skipping.*” Jabu asked them to look at the pictures and relate what was happening in the pictures. The learners were not very responsive at first. The learners did not list all the activities in the story, Jabu then helped them. The educator asked learners to write their own story on the topic. Some learners busied themselves immediately with the work while others chatted and became noisy and restless. Jabu re-explained himself in IsiZulu so that learners could understand him. Pupils wrote simple sentences, there were spelling errors,

Figure 13: Sample of learner's work (Jabu's class).



(The researcher walked around and looked at a few books). The siren signaled the end of the lesson, those that did not complete their work were given a few minutes to complete.

In the second class, Jabu greeted learners. He introduced the lesson for the day – sentence writing. He introduced the topic for the sentence construction.

“Okay class, today you are going to write sentences on your week-end”.

Jabu asked learners to write what they did, they should pay attention to tense – write in the Past tense. Educator gave an example of his week-end to illustrate to learners what to do.

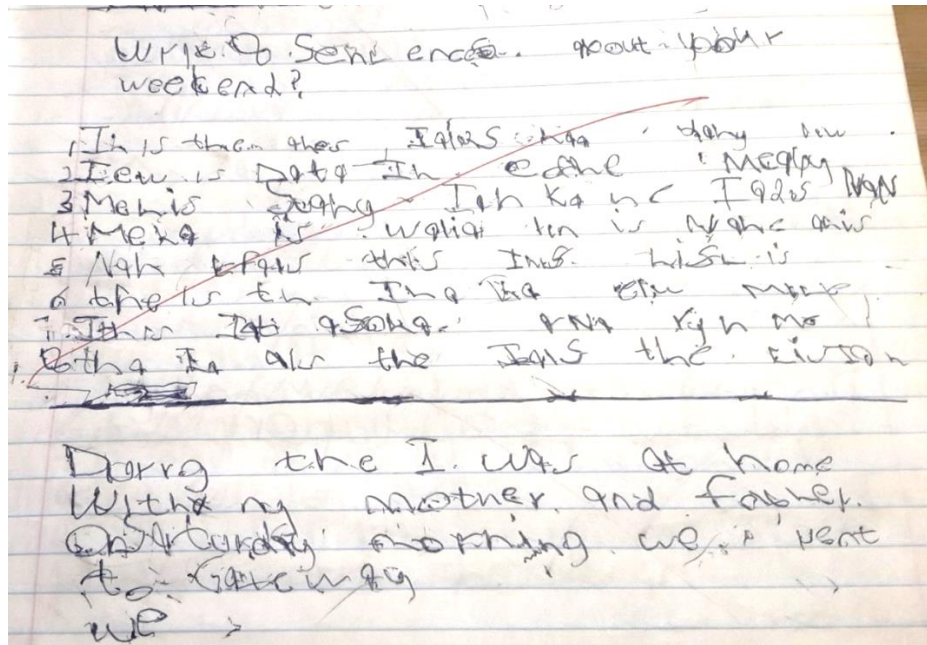
“During the week-end, I went to church with my family. After that, we came home and had breakfast. I visited a sick relative and went to Gateway to do a bit of shopping.”

Jabu asked learners to write what they did in their week-end. Pupils were able to write very simple sentences. A few of the learners could not write on the topic. They just played games with their friends. When Jabu was checking their work and asked them why they were not writing, they responded that they did not do anything constructive during the weekend.

Jabu, *“I am sure you did do something, even if you stayed at home, write what you did.”*

The learners shook their head at him and started to write in their books. Some learners wrote on Jabu's activities. There were spelling, Punctuation and word order errors.

Figure 14: Sample of Learner's work (Jabu's class).



Jabu did not explain himself properly to the learners. In the first class he used the picture as a reference. The learners misunderstood him and wrote on what they saw in the picture. When Jabu asked learners to write on their week-end, he did not explain what a week-end is or engage the learners in a discussion of what people do during a week-end. If Jabu had discussed it, learners would have given him sentences and he could have created a word bank for them. This writing frame would have assisted the learners. The policy document states that when learners write, they should draft their writing. In this case, learners wrote directly into their books. Jabu did not provide any support for them. They did not have access to a dictionary which would assist them in spelling words. Learners neither asked Jabu to assist in spelling words for them.

Rani enthusiastically greeted learners who responded to her in a sing song manner. She quickly settled them down. She introduced the topic that they will be writing on. Rani wrote words on the chalkboard – “*cage, hamster, helmet, starlight* “. Learners were asked to repeat the words. They were asked for a definition of each word. Learners responded well. Rani asked learners for oral sentences on these words. Learners constructed simple and complex

sentences. Group 3 learners constructed simple sentences. (*I see a bird in the cage. The helmet is big. I have a hamster. I see the starlight*).

Groups 1 and 2 were able to construct complex sentences (*The boy keeps his bird in the cage. You cannot drive a motorbike without a helmet. My dad bought me a hamster for my birthday. We sat under the starlight and watched the play*).

Rani choose one sentence with each word randomly and wrote it on the board. Then she requested the learners to chorus read the sentences. Learners were asked to write sentences on the same words in their books, but the sentences must be different from the examples that were done. Learners were able to spell most of their words correctly. This was observed from their written work when the researcher walked around and looked at pupils books. Group 3 learners were unable to complete their work, some learners were struggled to construct a sentence. A few rewrote the sentences that were used as examples. Rani walked around the class correcting learners' work. The siren signaled the end of the lesson.

The similar lesson was conducted in the second class. The same approaches were used. Learners' response similar to the precious class.

In the third class, a lesson on paragraph writing was conducted. Rani penned the word on the board, "**Time**". Learners were requested to spell the word and also define it. Pupils shouted out answers but Rani reminded The learners responded and were given a chance to answer. Learners constructed simple and complex sentences orally on the word.

Learner 1: "*Can you tell me what time it is, please?*"

Learner 2: "*During the test we must make use of the time to answer the paper very well.*"

Learners were then told their topic for paragraph writing was about a person that won money. Learners were asked how a person wins money. They responded that people win money when they visit the casino and gamble, when people play the lotto and also when they enter various competitions. These responses were written on the board.

Rani then requested students to relate an incident of someone who had won money. Very few learners responded. The activity for the learners was to write on this topic in their books. They could relate a real experience or use their imagination. The paragraph was to consist of six sentences explaining who, when and where that person won the money. While the learners were busy with this activity, Rani proceeded to mark the previous set of work. She

walked around observing the learners doing their work. Learners' spelling was not very good. There were a few learners that just wrote the topic and sat idly waiting for the lesson to terminate. As enrichment work, learners were given an exercise from the workbook.

According to Kalay she introduced learners to writing simple sentences then, complex sentences and thereafter paragraphs. When learners write a simple sentence, they use words that have been taught to them. It also includes sight words and high frequency words. She always ensured that a dictionary was available for learners to spell words. Sentence construction was done daily. She was very observant when learners were writing, checking their pencil grip, letter formation and spacing.

CAPS utilizes the process method when writing. The process includes learners preparing, writing, proofreading and presenting texts intended for others to read. Foundation phase learners will not change their work, but to a certain aspect amend by drawing a line over unnecessary words and adding text where required. Here again Rani did not employ these strategies. Although in Rani's classes many learners could write well, she should have employed these strategies with the challenged learners. Both educators did not explain the four elements necessary to good paragraph writing which was, concord, clarity, spelling and language structure. Learners wrote their sentences hoping that it was good. In Rani's classes the learners also did not use a dictionary nor ask Rani for assistance in spelling any words.

In grade three, writing becomes an important element of the school curriculum. Learners write more self-sufficiently than in any earlier grade and apply a substantial amount of time involved in writing self-sufficiently. Learners improve their paragraph writing abilities and write multi-paragraph works. As indicated in grade three writing benchmarks, learners learn to systematize their efforts by means of an introduction, body, and conclusion, concentrating on order of incidents. This is outlined in the CAPS policy document. Learners are also trained to apply expressive elements and literary stratagems such as conversation, opinion, and metaphorical language. Grade three's carry on expanding their understanding of language rules, spelling, and technicalities, in addition to evaluating writing. The participants struggled with teaching writing to the learners. Jabu was a senior primary educator and had no knowledge of the skills needed to teach writing to his learners. Both educators were not adequately work-shopped on the CAPS document to understand how to implement it in every facet of English. Lack of supervision also compounded the problem that both educators were experiencing. The CAPS document clearly outlines how to teach each concept, coupled with

the supervisor's assistance the educators would not experience any problems. But, the participants lacked supervisor assistance, hence they could not effectively implement the curriculum.

4. 2.13.2 Troubling Phonics

In this component of English the aim was to determine whether learners could blend sounds and also to construct oral sentences to display their understanding of the word. Jabu greeted the learners and settled them down. He asked the learners to take out their workbooks and turn to the respective page for the lesson. He asked the learners what type of work is set out there. They responded that it was "PHONICS". Jabu drew their attention to which section that was and the learners responded that it was "Diagrams".

"Is that consonant or vowel diagrams?" Jabu asked.

The learners responded that it was vowel diagrams. Jabu asked what blends it was, learners responded that it was "ee" and "ea" blends. Jabu told learners that they were recapitulating on Diagrams. All learners read the words thrice. Jabu wanted to know the meaning of the words. Learners were unable to give an answer of what a "seal" was. Educator drew their attention to the picture in the workbook to illustrate the meaning of the word. He then explained that a "seal" is a sea animal. He drew their attention to the color and what it was doing. "Deal" no-one knew the meaning of this word either. Educator explained that a deal is like an agreement between people. "Weep" a few learners knew the meaning of this word.

One child shouted out, "crying!" Some learners laughed at his response. Jabu asked them to be quiet. He put up their work on the board and requested them to copy the words and write sentences with the words. He repeated this instruction in IsiZulu. Learners settled down and busied themselves with the work. Jabu walked around checking to see if learners were completing the task.

In Jabu's second class he introduced the lesson differently. He inscribed the word "Diagrams" on the board and read it out. Students repeated the word. He then wrote diagrams from the chart. Some learners could not recognize or identify what a Diagram was even though he had explained in IsiZulu to them. Only a few learners could identify the sounds in the words. Some of the words given were "green", "each", "leaf".

He affirmed their answers. He inscribed the words on the board. He requested learners to construct oral sentences with these words. Only a few learners could construct a sentence with the diagraphs Jabu wrote their work on the board and requested learners to copy it into their books.

“Bhala amagama bese wenza imisha ngowo lamagama.”

They had to construct sentences with the words. Learners began writing and Jabu walked around checking their work.

During a Phonics lesson, much emphasis is placed on sounding letters. Jabu did not teach each sound first, then blend them and allow learners to repeat the diagraph. CAPS states that Phonics lessons should increase in complexity. CAPS is also very prescriptive. The lessons are broken down into weeks and the lesson content is clearly laid out. However, Jabu was not following the document. When the lesson was observed, work from Term 2 week 7 should have been covered, however Jabu was still completing Term 1 week 8. These diagraphs sounds were taught in grade 2 and Term 1 is a revision of Grade 2 work. However, some learners could not remember the work. Had Jabu being properly supervised he would know have discovered that he was lacking in terms of curriculum implementation. His supervisor would have corrected him and he would be on track with the document.

Rani began her lessons promptly. The learners were ready to start and their relevant books were already taken out and on their desks. Rani conducted a Phonic lesson on Diagraphs, using consonant blends. The same lesson was done in two of her classes using the same approaches. She inscribed the sound onto the board (“gr”) and requested students to repeat the sound. She asked learners to blend the sound and form words. The words given were almost similar. Learners were asked to choose a word and define it and then construct an oral sentence to show their understanding of the word. Pupils were enthusiastic to respond and although their hands were up, they shouted out their responses. Rani settled them done and wrote their responses on the board. Learners were asked to repeat the sentences. In both classes, learners were able to construct simple and complex sentences. In class B, two learners constructed a complex sentence and used two consonant blends in the same sentence. Rani proudly praised their efforts.

In her third class, Rani conducted a lesson on vowel blends (“oa”). She asked learners what vowels were and learners responded that when one writes a sentence and a vowel blend is

used, the word “an” is used in the sentence. Rani affirmed their answers. She inscribed the sound on the board and requested students to repeat the sound. She then asked learners to construct words with the sound. As the learners responded, Rani wrote these words on the chalkboard. Learners were asked to define the word and construct a sentence. The class became rowdy and began to shout out their sentences. Rani told them that she was not listening to them. The learners quickly settled down in an orderly manner. Their responses included simple and complex sentences. There were a few dominant learners in the all of Rani’s classes who responded to Rani all the time. They made every effort to be heard. Rani was also not following the correct section of the CAPS document. At the time of this lesson observation, she should have done Term 2 week 2 phonics, but she did not in two of her classes. Here again there was no consistency in her teaching. Only in her third class did she follow the CAPS document. She pointed out that due to learners writing too slowly she was unable to complete the work. Jabu also found this to be a problem in his classes. Again, these sounds were taught in grade 2, this was merely a revision of grade 2 work. She also did not teach the sounds properly. There were a few learners that did not understand and were not able to blend the sounds effectively. These learners were also struggling to read.

Kalay pointed out that in her presentation of a Phonics lesson, she revised single sounds, vowel blends and thereafter diagraphs. During the Reading lesson this is retaught and reinforced with the group. Learners use these skills during reading or writing. Learners were also taught how to decode words so that they can read the words for example “bag” each letter will be sounded out , “bub”; “aah”; “guh” and put together to say the word.

Phonics assist learners in reading and comprehension. Phonics help learners pronounce words they do not recognize immediately. According to Pikulski (1998), Phonics teaching is precise; learners are openly and lucidly educated about associations concerning letters and sounds. Children have numerous chances to prepare and relate these learnings in an assortment of techniques, comprising of letter swaying to construct words and relating phonic proficiencies to translate readers and writings. Due to phonics and spelling teachings, learners acquire the capability to subdivide and merge phonemes and to construct words by combining letter sounds. All children that go to school have been exposed to phonics. Phonics is the simple reading education that teaches learners the connections regarding letters and sounds. Phonics equips children to use these interactions to speak and write words. According to a study by the Partnership for Reading (2000), the purpose of phonics teaching

is to assist learners study and incorporate the "alphabetic principle"-the methodical and anticipated associations among printed letters and sounds. When children know and understand these interactions due to phonics, children identify well-known words precisely, and start reading.

4.2.14 Language Skills

During a language lesson, learners are taught language skills. They are taught how to construct sentences.

Jabu did a lesson on Punctuation. He wrote a sentence on the board and requested learners to repeat the sentence. Learners responded in unison. He asked them to observe what was wrong with the sentence, that is, how it was written. Learners took a moment and then discovered that there was no Capital letter and a Full Stop in the sentence. Jabu asked learners where a Capital is written, they were able to answer correctly. Not all learners could follow the lesson, they appeared to be somewhat lost. Jabu wrote the activity on the board and requested learners to complete the work. Not all the learners busied themselves immediately with the work, they chatted to their peer and then very slowly began their work.

In his next class, Jabu conducted a different lesson. The lesson was on "has/have/had". Jabu recapitulated from the previous lesson on "is/are; was/were" he asked learners when these concepts were used in a sentence. Learners answered well and were able to identify the similarity in the concepts. Jabu wrote a sentence on the board and asked learners if it was correct or not-"I has a pen.". Learners were able to identify that it was incorrect. They corrected the sentence end and gave the answer, "I have a pen."

Learners read sentences from the workbook. Jabu asked learners for the correct concepts. Learners answered him correctly. Jabu asked them why they used "have", they answered that the word "trees" was in plural form. However many learners could not identify when to use "had". Jabu wrote a sentence on the chalkboard to illustrate the difference, "I usually _____ cereal for breakfast".

Jabu explained himself in IsiZulu. Learners repeated the sentence. Further examples were given to learners. The siren signaled the conclusion of the period and learners were unable to complete written work in their books.

Teachers differed in their lesson presentations in each class. When Jabu started his lesson on Punctuation, he did not explain the term to learners, neither did he ask them what it meant. In the first class, he was following the CAPS document but in the next class he was not.

In the observation of lesson 5, in Rani's classes a different concept was covered. In the first class, a lesson on "Tenses" was conducted. The educator then proceeded to recapitulate the previous lesson on "Tenses" using the question and answering method. She was also simultaneously doing remedial work of a recent test. Rani wrote the sentences from the test on the chalkboard and invited learners to read it. Using the lecture discussion method, she asked learners to put the sentences into the future tense. The learners were able to answer properly. The slow learners battled with the concept, they could not answer correctly. Learners copied the sentences into their notebooks. She encouraged them to proceed with the work quickly. As an activity, learners were asked to rewrite a few sentences starting with the words: "Today, yesterday and tomorrow". As learners were busy with their work, Rani walked around checking on learner's work.

In the second class, a lesson on "Punctuation" was conducted. Rani wrote a few sentences on the chalkboard.

1. may I have my black pen
2. there are seven players on the netball team
3. stop that now

She recapitulated from the previous lesson on "Sentences". She recapitulated on the types of sentences: "Statements, Questions, Exclamations and Commands." She asked learners for the definitions of each of these, learners read the definitions from their notebooks. She then proceeded to ask for examples of each type of sentence. Learners were unable to provide examples. Rani gave one example, then learners responded. She asked learners to read the instruction on the chalkboard. Pupils read it and then Rani read the instructions. Pupils repeated. Rani further clarified the instructions. She did two examples on the chalkboard. After using the teacher directed method, the learner activity allowed the learners to engage in an activity that required them to use explanations and examples to use the correct punctuation marks in the sentences. Rani went around marking and supervising learner's work.

In the third class a lesson on “Verbs” was conducted. A lesson was not taught on the concept, rather Rani remediated the concept. A few sentences were written on the chalkboard. Learners read the sentences. Learners were asked to identify the Verbs. Learners responded well. An activity was set out for them to complete in their books. They had to underline the verbs in the sentence. Whilst learners were busy with the activity, Rani marked the previous set of work.

Although Rani was not doing the same lesson in all her classes, she was teaching concepts that were highlighted in the CAPS document. The lessons were presented quite well. Rani explained and re-explained her instructions and the concepts she was teaching to learners. Learners’ responses were also good.

According to Kalay, the concepts taught were supplemented with reference charts. When learners are completing a piece of work, they are able to check their answers or use as a reference. She gave learners homework based on the concepts that were taught in the classroom. When she is discussing an extract for Shared Reading, she also revises the language concepts in the text. In this way she can also check if learners understood what she taught.

Good grammar teaches thinking skills and encourages logical thinking. According to Calkins (1980); DiStefano and Killion, (1984) and Harris, (1962) piquantly advise that the most helpful method of assisting learners increase their knowledge of written grammar is to use learner's written work as the foundation for deliberating linguistic concepts. Academics have concurred that it is more applicable to explain punctuation, sentence variety, and writing than to teach the subject in isolation.

With regards to learner development, Musini (1999) describes three stages of learning: “dependence, independence and interdependence”. Dependence is when one relies totally on other people, independence relates to the physical, emotional and intellectual dependence of the learner on himself and interdependence is when a person progresses, is self –reliant, confident and respectful.

Learners were dependent on the educators to assist them in all aspects of their learning. They could not work on their own. There were very few learners that were independent. They could read and write quite well.

Both educators were unfortunately not trained in Foundation phase and did not have the necessary knowledge to assist them in their dilemma. Although the educators read with the learners they were not consistent. According to Crevola and Hill (2001) there is still proof that initial reading achievement is crucial to lasting school accomplishment and lifetime knowledge, and that early involvement as soon as reading difficulties occurs, is crucial if lasting difficulties are to be circumvented. Learners that productively acquire reading skills in their initial time at school are well equipped to read for knowledge and for indulgence later on. Conversely children who battle to read from Grades 1, 2 and 3 are seriously disadvantaged.

Academically, they struggle to keep up with their classmates and they falter in other subjects. All educators identify that reading is crucial to success in school and during life. Thus teachers are committed to early reading success for all children, credit must be given to these educators for trying to assist the learners. Due to a lack of training and time they were unable to be more successful with their learners.

4.2.15 Resource Change

According to Kalay, "Teaching materials" are the resources teachers use to deliver instruction in the classroom. They sustain student knowledge and expand student achievement. Resources are used in collaboration with the content, students and the educator. Resources are available in numerous shapes and sizes, they support student learning and also increase learner success. For instance, a worksheet affords a student significant opportunities to complete exercises on the latest skill that he/she learnt. This assists in learning, the learner is able to explore and learn on his/her own.

Resources are an integral part in teaching. It helps learners to improve their comprehension skills, understanding, demonstrating or emphasizing an ability or idea, distinguishing teaching and dismissing uneasiness or monotony by offering information in a novel and stimulating manner.

They assist the educator in the lesson, supplementing and adding value to a lesson. It helps educators to breach the gap and improve the reading comprehension skills of their learners. Magazine, newspaper articles and even comic books are practical resources.

Rani and Jabu noted that the workbooks complemented the teaching of the curriculum. The workbooks proved to be an impressive complement for the educators when a skill or concept was to be strengthened. Learners could practice at leisure and the information was interesting and challenging

Resources can be the educator herself as well as printed resources. Both are vital for the successful implementation of the curriculum. This point was brought out quite strongly by Jabu, when he suggested that the most important resource was “the educator” since all the resources would be meaning less if there was no educator to “do the job”. An important aspect of the educator was his ability to improvise when teaching. Jabu elaborated that, *“Teacher quality matters. In fact, it is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement.”*

According to Guadalupe at FOCAL (The Canadian Foundation for Americas), educators are perhaps the greatest and significant instruments in the education since they unswervingly shape learners’ education. Suitable educators can create successful educational experiences for their learners, including under unfavorable situations. They also help their learners obtain essential knowledge even with a deprived curriculum and restricted resources because, finally, it is the educators’ day-to-day efforts that impacts on learner’s proficiencies. Similarly, an outstanding curriculum complemented with excellent textbooks and well-resourced classrooms can be totally hopeless if educators do not utilize them. Consequently, educator’s activities are exceedingly crucial, a point made by Jabu in his responses above.

FOCAL further states that accepting educator functioning necessitates examining numerous crucial features. Firstly, it is crucial to identify and appreciate educator’s insights of their occupation, define their expectancies, desires and disturbances, and focus on aspects that may inspire them in their job. Secondly, it is essential to distinguish who can and who cannot teach, to know the strengths and weaknesses of their skills to establish what how successful they will be in their teaching and what areas of their teaching needs to be reinforced and thirdly it is crucial to understand their social associations, their aspirations and accountability.

Participants felt that the educator is vital in unpacking the curriculum and implementing it in the classroom. This is vital for the success of the lessons and the learner as is illustrated above. Resources are integral to teaching. CAPS has supplied all the necessary resources for

educators and these resources are valuable reference charts for the educator. It minimizes administration work – the educator does not have to spend tireless hours marking charts. They can now focus on teaching in the classroom.

4.2.16 Assessment Policy

The National Protocol for Assessments for Grades R – 12 (DoE, 2012, p.12) describes assessment as a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information to assist educators, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners.

In response to the question to educators: How have you been monitoring learners' progress? Each of the participants responded with the different assessment strategies that is outlined in the CAPS document.

Participants spoke of monitoring learner's work.

Rani commented,

“I know they are progressing, if I check their books, look at their work and I check if they can write properly in their books, if they writing better as you marking their books you will be able to see. And from their weekly tests, we write a test every week.”

Kalay also added that she assesses learners daily. She marks learners' books daily to enable her to know if learners are progressing and understand the concepts that are taught. Their reading and Phonics is also assessed daily. This concurs with the recommendation by the NCS Grades R-12 (2012) that assessment should provide an indication of how much the learner has achieved by obtaining evidence of such achievement.

In the new Assessment policy strategies in CAPS, assessments include continuous, formal and informal. Examples of formal assessments include: “projects, oral presentations, demonstrations, performances, tests and examinations”. (DoE, 2012 p. 5).

Assessment covers all the components of English for each term. There are also weekly assessment guidelines. The assessment practices that are encouraged are continuous, planned and integrated. It is very probable that in each class there will be certain students who would experience obstacles to acquiring knowledge. These factors to learning include factors such as lack of resources as the context factor and in the students themselves, i.e. sensual, bodily,

academic incapacities or sickness or infections. Barriers to learning can also result from the societal circumstances, i.e. poverty, violence or domestic situations (DOE, 2003).

Jabu and Rani have identified the barriers to learning experienced by their learners with regards to written work and written instructions and therefore conducted their own assessments orally and by means of a baseline assessment to gauge the kind of learning that had taken place.

Another form of assessment strategy that the educators employed was observation, listening and speaking. Thus in Foundation phase, time is exclusively allocated to the growth of these two significant abilities which is developed at the beginning of a lesson. These are oral activities. The educators observed the learners whilst they performed their tasks.

In response to the first critical question, what changes have been effected in Literacy it can be deduced that Reading is pivotal in the learner's life. If the learner can read and understand all other learning is possible and this helps to combat illiteracy. The types of books that learners read are also important. Reading helps learners to move through the education system easily, it improves results and develops critical thinkers. The educator is also an important resource, and the implementation of the curriculum rests solely with the educator. For this to be effective, the educator has to be properly and thoroughly empowered. The Department of Education has to provide opportunities for the educator to be explicitly trained to teach.

4. 3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the data that was generated by the lesson observations and the semi structured interviews. The data has been presented in thirteen themes, namely conceptualization of the curriculum how this impacted on the curriculum; OBE Pedagogy and CAPS pedagogy and how the learner's educational needs were met; curriculum change-expectations and how this affected learning; clearly specified content and preparation and how this impacted on learner development; lower level learners and their response to the curriculum; parental support and the impact it made in the learner's life; English Language Difficulty and Code switching.; Professional development and how this prepares educators to handle curriculum change; the positive impact of CAPS and how this addressed the issue of change; specialization approaches and how this impacted on learner development; new

reading experiences and the importance of reading; resource change and the integral role it played in teaching and Assessment policy and how this is accomplished within a lesson. It became evident from the observation that the lessons mainly employed teacher directed approaches and therefore the lessons were mainly teacher centered than learner centered. This could be due to the fact that both educators were inexperienced and not properly trained in Foundation phase. They also lacked intervention from the supervisor. This impacted negatively on their teaching.

In the next chapter I summarize the findings obtained from my analysis of the data, and suggest a few recommendations for future research and teacher training.

CHAPTER 5

Findings and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

In this study the researcher wanted to explore the experiences of Foundation phase educators within a context of curriculum change in English Literacy. In this chapter the findings and recommendations of this study are presented. This study specifically explored the teaching of English in Grade 3. In the Literature review chapter various books and articles were critiqued. Through various discussions on curriculum change, as discussed by Jansen (1998, 1999), Chisholm (2004, 2005) and Carl (2002), the literature review, recognizes what the literature states about the involvements of educators in Foundation phase, the impact of curriculum change and how this influences English. Educational transformation in South Africa is deeply political and radical. For two decades this has been the case. The PIRLS test in 2006 indicated that South Africa had lower achievements than all other countries. In 2011, South African learners' functioning in the PIRLS tests emphasized the demand for reading instruction exercises that focus on the problems in grammar and reading in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases.

This research used the New Literacy Studies framework. The strengths and weaknesses of the framework were discussed. Literacy in this study related to real situations and experiences, the learners drew on their experiences and were able to write sentences. When learners were reading and writing, they were engaged in a literacy event. The lessons were observed and written up after the observations. New Literacy Studies encompasses these activities.

The Methodology chapter explained the manner in which the research was carried out. This research used the qualitative paradigm. The research methods-case study, interviews and lesson observations were explained at great length. This study aimed to explain and describe educators' experiences of implementing the CAPS curriculum through specialist teaching. In addressing curriculum change, this situation had not been artificially generated for the purpose of this study, but already existed. This case is already a natural phenomenon which existed prior to the researcher embarking on this study. The case of understanding the specialist teaching approach will help to communicate its findings to others.

In the Data Analysis chapter the data that was gathered for the research was presented. Two key research namely, *What changes have been effected in English Literacy in Foundation phase and How do Foundation phase educators experience these changes?* formed the basis of the analysis. Most of the data was gained from lesson observations and the semi-structured interviews.

In the Data Analysis chapter a short biographical description of the participants was given. The findings of the interview and lesson observations were also described. There were 13 themes and each theme was explained. In this chapter only the themes that posed a limitation to the study are discussed.

In this chapter I provide a summary of the analysis as key findings emerging from the study. The findings summarized in this chapter are based on the data elicited from the semi-structured interviews conducted with four FP educators with the intention of *exploring the experiences of Foundation Phase educators within a context of curriculum change in English*. In the data analysis chapters at least thirteen themes were identified, but have been concretized into the following key findings namely, Teachers implementation of the new curriculum; Lesson activities and preparation; teaching methods and lesson preparation and medium of instruction.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Teachers implementation of the new curriculum

5.2.1.1 Workshops

The participants in my study indicate that the workshops, regarding the implementation of the new curriculum were not very beneficial. It was held over just half a day and could not possibly equip the teachers with all the necessary skills that were required to successfully implement the new curriculum. The trainers themselves were also not very well prepared to be of any assistance to the teachers that were training. The workshops were not very interactive, it dealt only with the theoretical training of the teachers; the training was very haphazard and the time spent was very short. They could not attend a workshop for a few hours and be expected to soundly implement the new curriculum. The CAPS document was not made available to all the educators, limited copies were handed out to schools. Just one copy per school was distributed. This was also a national problem and was a grave concern to many stakeholders. After the implementation of the curriculum very little mentoring was

offered to educators. During the following year just one workshop was convened. It was merely to report back on the ANA tests that were written in 2012. In March 2014, another workshop was convened to report back on 2013 ANA tests and the challenges that were experienced by the learners. Educators were also briefed on the use of the workbooks. The educators' views and the views echoed by various other stakeholders about the shortcomings of the workshops which they attended were abundantly clear.

5.2.1.2 Perceptions of CAPS

The respondents expressed their sentiments about the new curriculum. They found that it was a very good curriculum and the teacher was equipped with all the necessary information to successfully implement it. They did however find that certain content was irrelevant to their site. Although the educators were happy with the new curriculum, they were not strictly adhering to it. Problems of following the legislated sequence of lessons in the CAPS workbook may be undermined by learners' lack of ability and readiness, as well as the possible lack of efficiency on the part of some educators in the sample who were unqualified and hence unable to plan and organize the lessons properly. Their lack of experience translated into delays in implementation, as well as being unable to engage weaker learners proficiently.

5.3 Lesson activities and preparation

Lessons were conducted in all the components of English. The educators used the workbook to supplement their teaching. Although the educators were unqualified, they were effective in some instances as the data has revealed. However, their inexperience was evident during reading and writing. Jabu did not follow policy when he did group guided reading. He read with the entire class simultaneously. This was actually paired reading. While one group read, the others sat and listened to them. When asked why he conducted Group guided reading in this manner, he responded that the bright learners could assist the challenged learners. He did not flash any words from the text nor did he revise any Phonics. Clearly from the lesson observation, this method was not successful. Constructive reading was not done with the learners. The document clearly states that the group consists of 6 to 10 learners. He did not spend the allocated time with each group, and did not allow each learner from a group to read. Although reading was to be done daily, Jabu did not read daily with his learners, especially with the last group who needed to read daily.

Rani's reading groups were also large and she did not read daily with the learners. Both educators did not introduce the book to learners, predict the storyline, draw attention to the language structures, build learners' interest in the story, question learners about what was read, do a comprehension check or do a picture walk of the book. Learners read in a chorus fashion. They also did not complete a Reading age assessment for the learners, they did not call learners and test them so as to ascertain their appropriate reading age and then group them. There was also no evidence of flash testing in educator records of the words to determine how well learners knew the words. Learners were also not tested on their Phonic sounds.

Both educators did not do independent reading with the learners. When learners had completed their work, they chatted with each other. They did not read library goods in class or at home.

During Shared Reading it was evident that consistency in lesson presentation was not being followed. The same extracts for shared reading was not being done with all the classes that the educator taught. No explanation was offered for this. According to the policy document the text must be used over a day or two. The texts that Rani and Jabu used were simple, short and did not challenge the learners to think critically. In this regard, Rani also did not follow policy, regarding the complexity of texts. The educator did not discuss the title or the author or to retell the story in learner's own words. There was no evidence of the educator using different types of Reading material as laid out in the policy document. Learners only read from the workbooks.

Educators also did not do team teaching. Both educators worked independently although the tests were common.

In the Sentence construction lesson, in Jabu and Rani's classes, learners did not use a dictionary to spell words or seek the assistance of the educator. Hence their spelling was very poor. Jabu did not provide a word bank for learners to write their sentences. Both educators did not mention to their learners that the sentences should be interesting, that is use descriptive words. Many learners wrote very slowly and submitted incomplete work, the educator was not able to properly reflect on the lesson and plan accordingly for the next lesson. The learners that actively participated in the lesson, constructed very good sentences and were able to read very well. Spelling and sentence construction were their weak points.

During Phonics lessons, sounds were not drilled with learners during the group guided reading time thus slower learners could not grasp the content of the lesson and were unable to construct sentences with the words. Not all the learners were on the same level. The challenged learners needed personal attention, but unfortunately the educator could not afford them this time. Educators did not do a Phonics test for the learners to enable learners to know if they knew the sounds or not. The educator just assumed the learners knew the sounds. At this site, teachers only taught English at Grade 3 level. Both educators strongly found that this was the main reason why they couldn't reach out to the learners. Their contact time was very limited, they only saw the learners for English.

The educators presented different lessons for the grade. They did not team teach, each educator prepared his/her own prep according to what he/she believed was correct. The CAPS document was not adhered to strictly. The lessons were not done in detail. Jabu, relied mainly on the workbook, he did not consult other resources. Teachers adapted their lessons according to their learners because of the different ability levels of the learners. Certain aspects of the lesson prep were left blank, for example, Handwriting was omitted. The CAPS document facilitates the methodical instruction handwriting skills for approximately 15 minutes per day. Learners transcribe work from the chalkboard or transcribe from print to cursive and vice versa. There was no clear indication of what the educator was doing or whether this was done daily. The Head of Department (commonly called grade supervisor) merely signed the lesson preparation. No suggestions or amendments were noted in the lesson preparations. (The HOD was not a qualified Foundation Phase educator). Few Oral lessons were conducted although the CAPS document stipulates that each morning must commence with an oral activity for the entire class. The educator should discuss the day, date, the weather chart, learner's birthdays and any specific occurrences for the day. Here a few learners discuss their news share their news, talk about a picture or object, sports, and storytelling. The educator should make an attempt to hear each learner's news every fortnight. Unfortunately at this site, these activities could not and were not done.

Lesson preparation was done very scantily. There was very little evidence that the lessons prepared were in accordance with CAPS curriculum. The learner activities were not very well coordinated. What was very positive was that a lesson was being prepared each day, although this was not totally in accordance with the policy guidelines. During shared reading learners only read the workbooks, the educator did not use different reading genres. Learners only read from the workbooks. The articles were very short and did not challenge the

learners to think critically. With the new curriculum, educators are meant to work together so that all learners are on par since ANA will be written. This change is important because it ensures that all educators are working as a team and that the workbooks are being utilized properly, because the workbooks are dated, and focuses on specific skills and content.

5.4 Teaching methods and lesson Preparation

Lesson preparation is the epitome of successful teaching. The lessons should be done in great detail, as this facilitates the educator's teaching strategy. The CAPS document emphasizes this point. All aspects of English must be taught. The teachers mainly used the narrative method. The narrative method suppressed the learners' ability to think analytically and stifled their curiosity. The question and answer method was chiefly used by both educators. However there were no group discussions. The absence of group discussions was not very healthy, as learners could not interact with their peers and the educator was unable to assess peer interaction. A positive observation of the educators, was that, they daily planned a lesson, even though it was scantily done.

When new words were introduced in the Phonics lesson, learners were asked to construct oral sentences. This allowed for some discussion during lessons. During Group Guided Reading, one educator engaged in rote reading. The learners did not sit in guided groups, the lesson was conducted with the entire class. Arranging the learners into too big Reading groups in rows and a circle, defeats the purpose of grouping them. Maheady (1997) stated that categorizing is one of the adjustable instructional issues that "can powerfully influence positively or negatively the levels of individual student engagement and hence academic progress." According to Goldenbergh (1993) in a small group, the environment is conducive for educators to work effectively with the learners. Learners have a wide-ranging chance to be able express themselves and simultaneously receive feedback from the other students and the educator. The participants' groups were too big and this did not facilitate effective group work.

The educator also did not flash difficult words for the learners. The highflyers in both the educators' classes were not exposed to many genres of reading. They were not challenged to think critically. They were also not introduced to independent reading which the CAPS document states should be done.

Both educators did not make use of Reference charts especially for language concepts. The workbooks were used in conjunction with lessons. One educator supplemented her teaching with another text.

5.5 Medium of instruction

The medium of instruction was English. The researcher noted with great concern that not all learners spoke English well even though these learners were in grade 3 and were at the school since grade R. Most of the learners spoke IsiZulu. Jabu had to code-switch during his lessons.

The students were not equally distributed among both educators. One educator had more challenged learners. Jabu had to prepare his lessons according to their levels and had to code switch from English to IsiZulu so that learners could respond to the lesson. Jabu was successful with this method. Learners attempted their work and tried to complete it. However, this was not very successful with all the learners. This was probably due to the fact that not all the learners spoke IsiZulu. Parental support was lacking at this site which impeded the learner's performance at school.

5.6 Recommendations and guidelines

The following recommendations and guidelines are founded on the conclusions and inferences of the research that was conducted.

5.6.1 Workshops

It is imperative and crucial that educators are well trained and thoroughly prepared with the proper skills before the implementation of a new curriculum. This must be done when pre-service training occurs. This should be followed with regular in-service training as the curriculum further develops, hence educators will be better equipped to teach and assess learners properly. The in-service training should include practical activities for educators. This training must be conducted by trained and specialized facilitators.

5.6.2 Teaching and learning

School Management Teams must be very extensively trained by the department of education so that they manage the curriculum effectively. They should be empowered with the proper

skills so that the mentoring and guidelines they provide to educators are effective and any problems they encounter during the dissemination of the new curriculum is handled effectively.

Follow up visits to schools must be done regularly at least once a term by department officials. Training should be conducted extensively and unpacked properly thus teachers are completely prepared with all the essential skills to implement the curriculum. Training of educators should be conducted early in the morning when they are able to grasp the content and should be conducted over a few days. Learners should be exposed to reading newspaper articles, magazine articles and poetry. This will help to stimulate their thinking. Dictionaries are a valuable resource and should be used during story writing and learners should be taught the skills of using a dictionary.

5.7 Conclusion

This qualitative study used an interpretivist lens to explore the experiences of Foundation Phase educators within a context of curriculum change in English literacy. To do this, the study was located at a primary school in Phoenix, Durban, where semi-structured interviews with four educators in the Foundation Phase were conducted and their experiences with engaging with the CAPS policy document as a basis for teaching and learning was interrogated. The study suggests that while the participating educators laud the new CAPS document, and make attempts to use it, their lack of training as Foundation Phase educators, large numbers of children who have no English language background, as well as lack of home support in terms of homework follow up, works against an effective implementation of the CAPS policy.

It appears that although educators are happier with the CAPS system, the socio-cultural background of the learners' present difficult contexts for educators who find it difficult to cope with the "new curriculum as was envisaged by the department". In answering the first key research question, *What changes have been effected in literacy (English) in Foundation Phase?*, I explored the concept of curriculum, compared the previous curricula from OBE, RNCS, NCS and then CAPS. The following changes were found.

It was found that the OBE curriculum was confusing and laden with terminology and since it relied heavily on resources, it did not fit the circumstances of the majority of under resourced and disadvantaged schools, the revisions in RNCS and NCS were meant to rectify the OBE

document but were still inadequate. The CAPS document appears to be a vast improvement upon the previous ones and is more structured listing the objectives as well indicating the time allocations per task, the structure which most educators were seeking.

The advanced changes in content and lesson preparation in the CAPS document especially for reading and writing were that educators would daily set time aside for lessons to improve learners writing and reading skills. Reading was broken down into Shared Reading, Group Guided Reading, Paired/Independent Reading and Phonics.

The levels of difficulty specified for the various age groupings, the use of resources, and the assessment policy. The CAPS document in the Foundation phase outlined activities from Grade R to Grade 3. There was Informal and Formal Assessment. In written work, Punctuation was emphasized. Learners should show an understanding of Punctuation. The fundamental resources in accordance with CAPS was a learner's book (which was supplied to each of the learners) and a Teacher's Guide.

The changes were effected in the CAPS policy document and clearly answers key question 1.

To answer my second key question, *how do Foundation Phase educators experience these changes?* I explored the educators' conceptualizations of curriculum, and examined how they translated the CAPS policy into practical lessons in the classroom.

Through the semi structured interviews with the educators about their experiences, and through observation it was found that while educators laud the CAPS system, they find it difficult to cope due to insufficient training in the implementation of the CAPS policy document and practical demonstrations of how to translate the information into daily reality as large class sizes debilitate against effective teaching. Further educators in the Foundation Phase need to be trained in FP at tertiary institutes to understand the specific dynamics of this young age group, to be effective teachers. Exploring how the Foundation Phase educators experience the changes introduced by CAPS also reveal their feelings that there should be more time allocated to deal on a one-to-one basis with low level learners to be able to assist them effectively; that the home language and lack of parental support and know-how in supervision of English, as well as English not being the mother tongue is a barrier to learning. Educators also feel that the age related assessments as suggested by the CAPS document may not be relevant as learners reading ages and chronological ages indicate large disparities. Educators suggest that there is insufficient input from the Department of Education by way of

support and training to cope with the practical implementation and difficulties experienced by educators. Educators feel that they are not given the full support of the curriculum development task team to assist them with problems. Workshops are only scheduled to report back on the previous year's ANA results and the difficulties learners experienced in the test papers. Workshops should be scheduled to investigate the reasons why learners are still experiencing problems in English and develop new strategies to assist educators. Reading and Phonic workshops have not been facilitated to assist educators with skills to improve reading in their classes, which could prove to be a valuable tool to improve the results of learners. It became evident from the observation that the lessons mainly employed teacher directed approaches and therefore the lessons were mainly teacher-centered than learner-entered. This could be due to the fact that both educators were inexperienced and not properly trained in Foundation phase.

Therefore it is imperative that educators be briefed in the use of the CAPS document at the beginning of the year to ensure they work smartly and timeously. The CAPS document appears to be a tremendous improvement over the past curriculum changes and appears to be well received by the participants in my study. Should both the local authorities, that is the School management, and the Department, take cognizance of the experiences of the educators as reported in this study (and perhaps extend the study as an official one to other schools) and make serious attempts to address these, then the CAPS document will further emerge as a valuable tool to assist educators to deal with one of South Africa's dominant problems – that is English literacy.

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8. Participation will be sought from the respondents by verbal explanation, as well as an explanation in writing, and a written declaration of confidentiality from me
9. The participation is voluntary and educators may withdraw from the interview at any for any reason without explanation to me.
10. Permission will be obtained from the school principal in writing.
11. My interviews will be unobtrusive and will not disrupt the school teaching time in any way.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Yours faithfully,

P. S. Tolmen

Date

Email: darsini108@gmail.com

9. The participation is voluntary and educators may withdraw from the interview at any stage for any reason without explanation to me.
10. Your permission is sought in writing.
11. My interviews will be unobtrusive and will not disrupt the school teaching time in any way.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Yours faithfully,

P. S.Tolmen

Date

9. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the interview at any stage for any reason without explanation to me.
10. Permission from the school principal has been obtained.
11. My interviews will be unobtrusive and will not disrupt the school teaching time in any way.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Yours faithfully,

P. S. Tolmen

Date

I, _____, having listened to and read the explanation of this study from P.S. Tolmen, agree to voluntarily participate in this study with the understanding that all information will be treated in the strictest confidence to be used for study purposes only and that my name will not be used.

Signed _____ on _____
(date)

at _____ (place)

Signature of researcher as witness: _____

Appendix D

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher | Observer |
| Grade: | Date & Time |
| Observation focus (techniques, activities, learner responses, etc) | |
| <p>Types of teaching used during observation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phonics – Are pupils able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blend sounds • Segment words into 2/3 sounds • Construct an oral sentence to show understanding of word/s 2. Language Identify concepts being taught and use correctly in sentence/paragraph construction 3. Sentence /Paragraph Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct simple or complex sentences • Use Phonics knowledge and spelling rules to write unfamiliar words 4. Shared Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are learners able to orally answer questions? • Are they able to make predictions about the story? • Is the learners’ listening and comprehension skills, being developed? • Can learners identify sight words? 5. Guided / Group Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can learners read the book on their own? • Are they able to read words and sounds already taught? • Can learners identify sight words? • Are they reading with expression and correct punctuation | <p>Responses, reactions, participation, etc</p> |
| <p>Classroom atmosphere Work management Teaching goals Materials used Students motivation</p> | |
| Discussion points (looking over notes, things that can be picked out and can be discussed) | |
| Learning Points : What has the researcher learnt from observing this lesson ? | |

Appendix E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

CRITICAL QUESTION 1: What are Foundation Phase teachers' perceptions and understandings of changes that have been effected to the Literacy curriculum?

1. What is your understanding of a curriculum is? What aims and objectives should it fulfill? What should be the main aims and objectives of the Literacy Curriculum in the Foundation Phase?
2. What in your opinion, have been the main changes to the Literacy Curriculum for the Foundation Phase starting with Continuous Assessments and proceeding to Outcomes based education, RNCS, Foundations for Learning and this year CAPS ?
3. In your opinion, which of these changes have been educationally sound and further the main aims and objectives of a Foundation Phase Literacy Curriculum? Explain. Which changes were unnecessary and counterproductive? Explain.
4. How has Foundation Phase Literacy evolved through each curriculum that has been implemented?
5. Has it been difficult or easy for you to make sense of the latest curriculum, namely CAPS? Elaborate.
6. Were you work-shopped and adequately and trained by the Department of Education in the implementation of CAPS and if so comment on the training?
7. What support did you receive from your school to unpack CAPS?
8. Do you think CAPS would impact negatively or positively on Foundation phase Literacy teaching? Explain.

CRITICAL QUESTION 2: How do Foundation Phase teachers experience these changes?

1. How are learners responding to the current curriculum?
2. Is the content of the curriculum relevant to the learner?
3. Are they applying themselves to the curriculum?
4. Are pupils able to cope with the various components in Literacy? What are their strengths or weaknesses?
5. Have the results of the learners improved or declined? What sections have they improved in or declined in?
6. How are 2nd language learners coping with Literacy? Are they experiencing any challenges?
7. What resources are available to learners to improve their Literacy levels?
8. Has it made the teaching of Literacy easier or difficult? Explain.

Appendix F: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



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16 May 2012

Mrs P Tolmen (2115574444)
School of Education

Dear Mrs Tolmen

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0153/012M

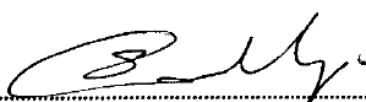
PROJECT TITLE: Exploring the experiences of Foundation Phase educators within a context of Curriculum change in literacy-English

In response to your application dated 18 January 2012, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.
PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully


.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Appendix G:



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8/162

Ms. Priscilla Selishna Tolmen
P.O. Box 1352
Hyper-by-the-Sea
4053

Dear Mrs. Tolmen

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **Exploring the Experiences of Foundation Phase Educators within a Context of Curriculum Change in Literacy - English**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The Period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 March 2012 to 31 March 2013.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following School:

10.1


Nkhisinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education

25/04/2012
Date

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL : Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G 25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, Pietermaritzburg 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610 | Fax: +27 33 3341 8612 | E-mail: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za |

Appendix H: The TURNITIN REPORT

The screenshot displays a Turnitin report for a thesis titled "Exploring the Experiences of Foundation Phase Educators within a context of Curriculum Change in English Literacy" by Priscilla Selishna Tolmen. The report shows an 8% similarity score. The match overview sidebar lists eight sources with their respective similarity percentages.

2014 EDCS830E1 M Thesis: Curri... TURNITIN - Part 4 (Moodle 25018173) - ..

Originality GradeMark PeerMark

Exploring the Experiences of Foundation Phase Educators within a context of
BY PRISCILLA TOLMEN

turnitin 8% --
SIMILAR OUT OF 100

**EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUNDATION PHASE
EDUCATORS WITHIN A CONTEXT OF CURRICULUM CHANGE
IN ENGLISH LITERACY**

Priscilla Selishna Tolmen
Student number: 211557444

Match Overview

| Rank | Source | Similarity |
|------|--|------------|
| 1 | www.education.gov.za Internet source | 1% |
| 2 | advocacyaid.com Internet source | 1% |
| 3 | Submitted to Universit... Student paper | <1% |
| 4 | iedsu.hk Internet source | <1% |
| 5 | fds.oup.com Internet source | <1% |
| 6 | stiba-malang.com Internet source | <1% |
| 7 | files.eric.ed.gov Internet source | <1% |
| 8 | en.wikipedia.org Internet source | <1% |